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THE TURN OF THE CURRENT

MARY ROSALIE ALLING WOOD

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THE TURN OF THE CURRENT

THE TURN OF THE CURRENT

A STUDY OF THE NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

BY

MARY ROSALIE ALLING WOOD

AUTHOR OF

"SOULS" AND

"AN EXPERIMENT IN EDUCATION"

"But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill."
—*Horatio, in Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 1*

WASHINGTON

M. R. A. WOOD

1904

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The Turn of the Current

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT AMBITION

Leon Gustaberg was a student at Heidelberg. His doctor's thesis was nearly finished. He leaned his elbow on the table and looked across it at his sister.

"Emma."

"Yes, Leon," without raising her eyes from the sewing which occupied her.

"Emma."

Emma looked up. "What is it, Leon?"

"Tell me now about mother."

"When your preparation for your profession is completed; not before."

"It only remains to hand this in," laying his hand on the manuscript before him.

"Is it finished?"

"All but the last page."

"And why not that? A week ago you said the same."

"I cannot sum it up until I know."

"Know what?"

"The cause of mother's death."

A silence followed, while a deep flush suffused Emma's face, and she moved uneasily in her chair, but did not look at Leon, who regarded her intently.

"Emma, tell me."

Emma rose, drew herself up and said slowly, "I will not—not yet—there can be no possible relation between any—any past in our family history and your doctor's thesis." With that she gathered her sewing and left the room.

Leon paced the room, to and fro, several times; and then, reseating himself, took a pen and wrote rapidly:

"The range of a man's consciousness is the measure of his capacity; the use he makes of it, the test of his worth. Few there be who dare believe all it presents; fewer still whose acts are its co-ordinated expression; and none who can so overcome fear as to welcome one phase of it as readily as another.

"The history of man is the record of the changes in his consciousness. And why does it change? Is the cosmic mind—so much of it as is in a race, a nation, a planet—like a man's mind,—its attention must be concentrated to be effective? And like a man's mind in growing out of one phase into another? As man has a memory of the principal phases of his consciousness from childhood up, so must a people, a planet, a universe, have a memory.

"As every cell of a man's body is nourished from the same source and one brain determines the conduct of the whole organism, and if, as has already been shown, atoms have consciousness,—there is no limit to the consciousness of any cell or of any combinations of atoms or of cells in a man's substance but the man himself: it follows that a man, as a cosmic cell, is not limited save by the cosmos itself.

"Consciousness is one thing, conduct another. Conduct is limited to the amount of consciousness that may be held in one focus of attention and so brought to bear at a given point of time or condition. And this differentiates men, one from another,—the amount of consciousness focused in a given instant of time.

"Man seems to add to the field of this focus point by action only, as though doing were the occasion of all consciousness. When man has liberated himself from this slavery to action, and can hold his focus point steady while he enlarges its field, he ought to become possessor of the consciousness of a race, a planet, a solar system, a universe.

"These are the undiscovered worlds to which man is now beckoned, and in these explorations neither sex nor age are disabilities."

As Leon finished writing, a finger reached out and touched his last words, and Emma said scornfully:

"More trash about women."

Emma had re-entered softly and stood looking over Leon's shoulder while he wrote. She was familiar with his thesis, having heard and discussed all its points. So long as Leon kept to the firm ground of proved scientific fact and widely accepted theories, she was content; but Leon's mind tended to leap from these to what she called unbridled imaginings, to produce a yard of prophecy out of an inch of fact. This tendency she deplored and combated on occasions opportune and inopportune.

Leon turned and smiled indulgently:

"You know that I am right, our experiments have proved—"

"Proved?"

"Suggested, if you like that better, that woman is intended to be the place of rest where consciousness is restored to its primal state, and the new impulse is born."

Emma walked slowly to the window, threw up the sash and let in the odors of blossoming trees and the songs of birds; but she noted neither; her mind was far away. At last she said:

"She did not die."

Leon gave a sudden lurch in his chair and made as though he would rise; then settled back.

"Where is she?"

"In California."

"A half a world away. Why?"

"It was better so."

"How much responsibility you take on yourself?"

Emma closed the window and faced her brother, her eyes indignant.

"She would have spoiled your career utterly."

"What is my career as you call it? One more man starting out to try to be what thousands of others are. Is there any distinction in that, or any sufficient reason for stifling the half of consciousness in two people? If man is a free agent and has a right to make something of himself along common lines, he has the right also to use his powers in uncommon ways if he can, and even to destroy himself in trying to do it. What is one cell in a man's body? No more is one man's life to the planet, and that man who sees a possible other way to live his life and serve his day is a coward if he don't try it. I'll be a coward no longer."

"Dear brother, the end is death."

"Then to death will I go."

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST REPULSE

In August, Leon and Emma Gustaberg bade good-bye to Europe and started on a long journey.

To Emma it was but one more failure, one more willful dawdling with life and its opportunities. Had she her brother's physique, health, youth, education, talents—she admitted them proudly—she would use them—so she said to herself—so that the world should hear from her. To be a part of it,—the great on-moving mass of human advance, to stand somewhere along the front line of it! Her head throbbed at the possibilities, and then grew heavy with the weight of Leon's unreasonable blindness. The shame of it! she thought—the shame of it, to leave so much to follow a mere fantasy, a chimera.

To Leon, the farewells were the shutting of prison doors, the beginning of freedom. How happy he was, out of all proportion to the occasion! A fountain of song seemed bubbling within him.

Their journey was uneventful, until they reached New York city, save that to Leon

every small detail of happenings seemed to conspire to their comfort, and omens of good—were he but superstitious enough to so regard them—were abundant.

At New York, Leon's first repulsion came. Courtesy bade them call on Aunt Silphy, the oldest surviving sister of their mother. They found her in a shabby house, in a shabby street, with all appearances run down at the heel. Aunt Silphy herself was the same, only more so—more slushy, sentimental, silly, religious than ever.

The street where Aunt Silphy lived had once been a respectable residence quarter; but respectability had long since moved away, though Aunt Silphy staid on. Uncle Horace had been a house decorator, an Englishman, a man of fine character and some parts; the second husband—neither Leon nor Emma could say uncle to him—was an under workman in a small toy shop, a man of no education, and the two silly old people talked of love and happiness and perfection.

Leon and Emma arrived on a day when a Profectionists' Club were to meet at Aunt Silphy's, and were urged to stay.

The club consisted of three men and fourteen women, and of these one man and eleven women were present that day, and there were present several other women who were not yet full members. The one man—Aunt Silphy's second husband was away at the toy shop—

was a gray-haired, smooth-faced, well preserved man of about sixty and the president of the club. After the opening ceremonies, this president knelt and prayed:

"O Lord God, Almighty, controller and guide of men, Thou who makest and unmakest whom Thou wilt, I thank Thee that I have not sinned for twenty-seven years, neither in thought nor in deed. I thank Thee that out of Thy abounding grace Thou hast kept my thoughts from evil, stilled my tongue from speaking venom, and kept my feet from the ways of the wicked, since my young manhood. I thank Thee that my years have been filled with good, and that my gray hairs are the product of righteousness. Even so, dear Lord, Thou hast done all this for me, because it seemed good in Thy sight to preserve Thy chosen vessel and to prolong his days that he might be a lamp unto the feet that stray, that his example might go" (here his voice took on new unction and cadence) "even to the ends of the earth with this youth and she Thy handmaiden whose journeyings have brought them here at this opportune time. We thank Thee that the duties of affection called them under this roof that they might receive the blessing of Thy servant whom Thou hast kept in ways of holiness."

The man then prayed for a few other persons and institutions that deserved his sublime attention and concluded:

"Remember now, O Lord, Thy great promise, that whomsoever shalt be bound or loosed by one who follows Thy holy way shall be bound or loosed eternally by Thee—remember so that those who put their trust in Thy servant be not ashamed or confounded. And to Thee in whom is all power be glory forever. Amen."

An irreverent "sister," who had not yet been received into full membership in the Club was sitting near Leon, and as this prayer concluded she reached her lips to Leon's ear and whispered:

"He has divorced two wives and married a third in those twenty-seven years."

Leon and Emma had been introduced to each member on arrival; and for this president with his thin, dry hand, oily voice, and self-depreciating manner, both had felt an inward aversion.

After the President's prayer, Leon set himself seriously to the study of the faces of all who were there assembled. To his present, perhaps over-critical judgment, there was not a single pleasing face in his aunt's little parlor. Erratic, wild-eyed, sentimental, simpering egotists and amazing liars they all were, he said to himself as the meeting progressed. Whether all were conscious of lying was another matter; but before the afternoon was over, Leon felt, with every indraw of his breath, that the atmosphere was psychically poisonous, and that

whoso there did not know of his state was responsible for not knowing it; for at some point, where the ways divided between common sense and inordinate religious vanity, the ego had set aside the sane part of his consciousness.

Emma divined enough of Leon's state to be silent and so Leon took his impressions unclouded into the railway express which they boarded near midnight of the next day. Too much had occurred in two days in New York City for Leon to deal with it all at once; so he put aside the impressions of the visit to Aunt Silphy's and let his mind free on the other sights and happenings until he slept.

Morning found them with a drizzling rain beating against the car windows. After breakfast, Emma settled herself to a book and Leon was free to open his chamber of doubts.

He recalled all that he knew of his mother's family,—a robust, long-lived, queer race. Queer! he could recall no member he had seen or heard of who was just ordinary. One fasted himself to death in hopes of gaining spiritual insight by subduing the body; another tried to reach the same thing by indulging every vagary that entered her mind, on the plea that her desires must be "God-given" because she was quite as willing to have other desires if they had been given; another believed cold water the elixir of life; another that tobacco was a spiritual principle and when ingested

drew forces that regulated a man's kingdom so that forces not spiritual in himself or in others should not destroy or control his own legitimate, spiritual consciousness; and so on through the whole thirteen. There had been thirteen children, of whom his mother had been tenth, and not one of the thirteen had yet died under seventy years of age.

They were all experimenters, all seeking ostensibly for the same thing,—spiritual consciousness and well being; and yet not one of them in a long life had found anything, proved anything, done anything but follow vagaries to the discomfort of associates. All had been dubbed queer. None of them had ever been in a mad house,—so far as he knew—but the members of several of the families they had married into had thought they ought to be. Not one of them had made a success of life as ordinarily understood, and yet one only—Aunt Silphy—had ended worse than she began.

Was there a taint in the blood? Had they all been religiously insane? Was there in them all a fatal defect in character which hindered a concentration on the ordinary uses of life? And had he inherited this defect?

Leon could find excuses. They had all sought unselfishly the greater thing, but had not been able to achieve it. Was it in such that substance was taking on new states, and so preparing for a race of men to whom the spiritual should be as the physical?

Here Leon pulled himself together sharply. They always were, always had been making excuses. Each failure, to him who failed, had been due to some fault of personality or method, not to the thing pursued.

Was their apparently unselfish pursuit of higher aims but a cloak to selfish, slothful ease? Had they all been just shirks, too lazy to exert intelligence in usual ways and too cowardly to let others see that it was so; and so the most vicious sort of persons,—who under guise of greater nobility fail to do the simple, homely duty of the passing hour?

For days at intervals, constantly as undercurrent, the argument went on, now one side, now the other, in Leon's mind. He recognized, too, a sort of stupor in himself, a certain inability to see sharply the reverse, vicious side, as though he himself were drunk with the intoxication of his race. On the second day out from New York, as night shut in, climbing the great western plateau, Leon promised himself to have it out with his mother and Emma. His father—alas!—was dead, but Emma was like his father, while he favored his mother.

He had always counted his father as the superior in birth, breeding, education, character, and had a higher respect for his father's relatives. He had fondly imagined himself like his father in interior, while like his mother's race in exterior form and coloring. But was he? With every advantage of schools

and travel, of a chosen profession, and of a record considerably above the average in all tests that he had yet met, he was ready to turn his back on all common ambitions and starve and suffer and die if need be to know—what?

So he had thought. Was he deceived? Was it that he could not care for life as other men did? Was he interiorily only a lazy sloven after all? Or was there a great goal, a great possibility worth a strong man's utmost effort and devotion? And could he seek and find and point the way to others? It moved him, even to tears.

Does a hard-headed old scientist have emotions when he sees his goal? He wished he knew. Emotionalism was a characteristic of his mother's race, while his father's was stern and cold.

"Leon, don't you think you have spent enough time on unknowables?"

It was Emma beside him, unrealized for half an hour. He looked at her in the dim light and thought how sweet, how intelligent, reticent, sensible she was; and how bravely and well she had borne a hard life. He recalled, too, how often he had thought himself superior and pitied her common aims. Now, he wondered if the best he could do with his life was not to put himself under her direction, to do what she would had she his sex and preparation. Almost he was persuaded; it would be so easy, life so simple. He had but to begin

and stick to it as other men did; and he knew, or thought he did, that he would do the common thing uncommonly well. He was intelligent above the average, knew how to work, had a sense of accuracy, and the power to discriminate values, understood what real evidence is—yes, he would, if he did the common thing do it very well and get near the top at last. But the worth of it! Everybody was doing similar things, working along a few well defined lines.

"How vain you are."

His bubble burst. What was he to dream of doing what no man had yet done, and he blushed under Emma's gaze like a school boy. It was as though she read his thoughts and mocked him. It was not vanity; he resented the suggestion. Nor was it lethargic, selfish sloth; was he not ready to put aside marriage, home, place, all that most men loved and feared, and work with all the power there was in him?

"Would you do it, if no other mortal ever knew; if, having found, you were forbidden or unable to give?" asked Emma, meeting Leon's eyes.

"That would be impossible. If I knew, I could not but tell."

"But if you could not, if the price of knowing was silence?"

"Then would I, even unto death."

"You fool yourself, but if you could, still would vanity hug itself to be so unlike other men."

To this Leon's own mind added, and you wish it because you are foredoomed to failure at the common task and you know it. The brilliant parts shown at college often fail to realize their great promise in contact with actual men and affairs; and you shirk the, to you, Herculean task of studying and adapting yourself to other men and conditions as you must to win success; so you retire to a field where incapacity is at par with capacity and limitations are covered with a veneer of motives. If that realm is really a fact, a sane reality under intelligent jurisdiction, motive counts for as little there as here, results alone have weight, and failure is the same disgrace that it is here.

"Think of Columbus sailing round and round in innumerable circles in the Atlantic Ocean for years and then returning to Spain with, 'there must be something but I have not found it.' "

"Yes, Emma; doubtless there were such fools, though unrecorded; but there was the real Columbus also."

With that Leon turned toward the window and looked out into the night. Suddenly, he thought of his mother as he had last seen her, and then of what Emma had told him at Heidelberg; and as under a flash of lightning a landscape is vividly illuminated, so now he, for the first time, seemed to realize all the years between, what they had been to him without his mother, what they must have been to his moth-

er without him. Instinctively he drew further away from Emma, and presently she rose, crossed the car to her own seat, and resumed her book.

Leon and Emma Gustaberg were the only surviving of eight children. Karl Gustaberg, the father, had died when Leon was ten years of age. On his death bed, he committed the boy to the care of his second daughter, Emma, then in her twenty-fourth year. Throughout some ten years of domestic sorrows and social hardships, Emma had proved herself so acceptable to her father that, on laying down life's burden, he felt that Leon would be safe under her care, and more sure to realize his fondest hopes for the lad; because the task assigned was, from its very nature, easier for Emma to undertake and achieve than for him.

So he divided and settled his property in such wise that Emma controlled the whole for ten years; and, as a lingering but deadly disease gave him ample warning and opportunity, he worked out in detail what he thought the best plan for Emma to follow. She, concurring in this, had kept the letter as well as the spirit of her father's instructions. Two years had been added to the ten because Leon's desires had expanded with his opportunities and Emma had felt that in keeping her secret beyond the time set in her father's instructions she was but doing what her father would most desire,—allowing Leon to reach the end of his own ideal of

preparation for his chosen career before any possibility of his being turned aside from it should arise.

The great secret these twelve years was the mother, who, supposed to be dead by Leon, was in weekly communication with Emma.

Leon had loved his mother with a kind of passionate adoration. He had not approved nor respected her as he had his father; but the feeling was there,—a blind, unreasoning infatuation and demand; so that when after the death of his father, he had been separated from her, he had suffered from much boyish grief and homesickness. He had watched for her letters and written to her every day as a boy often will who is in love with his mother. Suddenly the letters had ceased. Emma had left him for a couple of weeks, returned dressed in deep mourning and told him that their mother was buried beside their father. For several years afterward Leon could not forgive Emma for not having taken him on that journey. The fact that she did not take him and her subsequent refusal to talk about their mother's last days and death, he had never understood: it all implied something not to be told, which implication he resented, until time and his own growing knowledge of himself and of other people softened the whole matter to certain harmless probabilities.

Now, Leon, reviewing those years with the added consciousness that all the time his moth-

er had been alive, felt a mounting resentment toward Emma. He looked across to where she sat unperturbed reading in the flickering car light, and her serenity stirred him to anger, almost to hatred. How could she, a woman apparently gentle and humane, perpetrate such a cruelty and keep it up twelve years? And his mother, what force had they used, what means to attain so inhuman an end? The cause he knew well enough and he knew, too, that from his father's point of view the only adequate course for Leon had been chosen; but the means, the detail by which that course had been made a fact inviolate for so many years, involved, to his imagination, incredible humiliations to his mother.

Emma came toward him smiling.

"Cicero says the test of excellence is appeal equally to the multitude and the most fastidiously cultivated; will your thoughts bear that test?"

Leon turned his face to the night.

CHAPTER III

HOPE RESTORED

The next morning the approaches to Denver were shrouded in dense fog, so that our travelers saw nothing beyond a few feet from the car windows; and when the train halted at the station, Denver was, for all they had seen, a town of commonplace setting. This was much regretted by Emma, who, having been over the route before, desired Leon to get the full effect of all the landscape that daylight allowed them to see, and she desired it the more this morning as Leon so much seemed to need to be lifted out of himself.

The stop was over and the train sped on, still through dense, opaque grayness. Suddenly this grayness lightened and the next instant Leon saw a plain stretching away to a barrier of mountains more lofty than any he had ever seen before, its top serrated into steep cones, its height broken midway by a band of vapor, level below, piled high in fantastic masses above. This cloud band emphasized the height of the mountains that could be thus divided and yet appear so far below it, so far above it. Along the roadway were fields of nodding sun-

flowers in splendid bloom. These with the crystal clear air, the sun filled, cloudless blue overhead, the still clinging masses of cloud dying on the mountain wall,—these banished gloom and doubt from Leon's mind. Had the train but stopped he would have alighted, knelt, and kissed the earth.

He looked at his sister and forgave her and his mind flooded with love and pity for her and for his mother. He believed in that moment that whatever of tragedy there had been both women had acquiesced in it from lofty motives, and that he had been expected to reap the reward; and, please God, he would to the fullest measure of his capacities.

Three months before, Leon had been through a strange experience. From childhood he had had of such experiences a good many of no very important nature and a few of startling character. One of the latter was now present in his consciousness, and he recalled its date,—exactly three months before,—the twentieth of May, the twentieth of August.

He had been asleep and had come to himself to find that he was in an unknown place. He was kneeling on a sandy shore, his back to a body of water through whose turbulance he had just come. The tension incident to the passage was vivid in his consciousness coupled with a deep sense of gratitude to have safely accomplished it.

Something outside and above seemed to speak inside his brain, "The Red Sea is passed. Your way now lies across the desert and between and among the mountains."

He lifted his eyes to see such a landscape as he had never beheld, even in picture, with certain features of it particularly marked.

He felt of himself, he was wide awake and lying on his back while vividly conscious of being on his knees on the sand, water lapping behind him, the strange landscape before him.

Slowly this vision had faded until there remained naught around him but his familiar room.

Like other visions he had had, this one had remained vivid in consciousness for several days; but being unable to gain anything from it or make of it any application to his affairs, he had dismissed it from his mind.

What he had just seen from the window of a railway carriage traversing Colorado was the exact reproduction in every detail of that vision minus the sea at his back in the vision and the flowers by the wayside in the reality. The vision had shown the way he was to go, "across the desert, between and among the mountains."

Some hours later, coming out of a cañon, the essential features of the vision were repeated by another band of vapor against another range of mountains with peaked tops. Late in the afternoon, he saw it a third time; and this

time with a long stretch of bare desert plain between him and it,—the Red Sea vision made complete in bareness.

This was the first time any of his strange experiences had been repeated in actuality: and how complete and arranged the fulfillment had been.

Fog in Denver in August is a rare phenomenon, but without that fog his vision landscape had been impossible; for in clear weather, the mountains come so gradually upon one in approaching Denver that such a single, vivid presentation is not possible. The vision picture had been repeated three times this day, each time more complete, until, in the third presentation, the bare majesty of the vision had been exactly realized: and the hour of this third—allowing for differences of time—was the hour of his vision three months before.

Were all of his vision pictures to come true, Leon asked himself,—was he at the beginning of a series of prophecies fulfilling themselves?

Emma knew some event had occurred, Leon's face was so touched with humility and trust, like the face of a little child. Emma was considered cold, stern, and practical; but this was not the first time, nor was it to be the last, when she was willing to lay down her life for this brother of hers.

That Leon had faults Emma knew, that he was not always exempt from the common limitations of men she thought probable; but she

now realized afresh what had always been Leon's chief charm,—left to himself, he reverted always to a state of idyllic, guileless childhood which showed that his nature was as yet uncorrupted. He had never been through an emotional debauch; he had not grown up in worldliness on any plane of his being.

These characteristics outlasting years at boarding school and college and considerable contact with social life had come near to reconciling Emma to his "queerness." To whom would visions come but to such as he. Yet worldliness as a body of knowledge, an understanding of men, was a power without which no man could succeed. Could this power be possessed by the intellect and used forcefully while the heart preserved its simplicity? Emma asked herself. She had not seen such. Was it the old story of Eden, and does the knowledge that fits for life always banish from Paradise?

CHAPTER IV

A SEESAW OF INFLUENCES

Leon and Emma stopped over for a day at Salt Lake City, Utah, and the day lengthened to two weeks.

They visited Great Salt Lake with its unique water and exquisite setting of form and color; drove and rode up cañons; and made a study of Mormonism, its buildings, institutions, and people.

In this last quest, they met some of the elders of the church and talked with some of the prominent Gentile residents. The older Mormon men disgusted Leon, but the younger awakened his curiosity. As a rule, he could pick them out from the crowd which was more than half Gentile. The young Mormons, those between twenty-five and thirty, wore an expression of spiritual failure, as though in accepting the faith of their fathers, they had killed all noble enterprise in themselves.

In connection with one of these young men, Leon had an interesting experience. Charlie Steuben was the son of a prominent Mormon of some parts who had sufficient faith in Mormonism to believe that his son could become

a man of the world and remain a Mormon; and sufficient respect for the world's culture to desire to give his son the best of it. This son was now nearing thirty; and to Leon's eyes the expression on his face was a little more hopeless than that of any other young Mormon whom he met: and as he was the only one of them who had received the advantages of a first-class college education and of travel for its own sake, Leon was curious about him and took some pains to cultivate opportunities for further acquaintance.

One afternoon, the two young men strolled together on the east terrace of the great Jordan valley; and ending the walk at the house of Colonel Schuler, whose guest Leon was, they sat down on the west porch to continue a conversation.

Leon was so attracted by the man's superior intellectual equipment and so painfully repulsed by the expression on his face in repose that his curiosity got the better of his manners and he bluntly asked:

"How is it that you are a Mormon?"

"My people are."

"Yes; but we of other faiths do not follow our people against our own convictions. I can understand how the Mormon elders and rulers remain Mormons: the church is the source of their power. I can understand how the peasants that are gathered here from all over the earth remain loyal: they have re-

ceived bounty and opportunity, and the Mormon faith promises the men much reward hereafter; and these peasants are too ignorant not to find these sufficient. But you, you have resided in the east, you are a graduate of Cornell University, you have mingled much with other societies and faiths, how can you really in your mind and heart be a Mormon?"

Mr. Steuben had dropped his eyes and shifted uneasily on his chair during this long question, which Leon put with direct gaze, but he answered bravely enough:

"I am a Mormon by conviction. Have you ever read any Mormon literature?"

"I have looked over your Bible hastily. I have not read it, I began to, but it was too big for a short pull. I have looked at nothing else."

"I will send you some books and pamphlets if you will read them: you can take them with you and read them at your leisure."

"Thank you: I shall receive them with pleasure, and will try to read them without prejudice."

"Will you?" Mr. Steuben became eager. "I should be delighted if some one of your capacity would make a dispassionate study of Mormonism. It has been much misunderstood and maligned."

But the hopeless failure expression settled again about Mr. Steuben's mouth and the talk drifted to other things. When his guest rose to leave, Leon accompanied him to the gate and

lingered afterward to note the incomparable beauty of the scene spread out before him.

The sun had just passed from sight, and the whole sky was an ethereal mass of exquisite palpitating color, as though the very particles of the air had caught and reflected the evening glow. No cloud was in sight and at the zenith it seemed as though one looked into interminable depths of glorified color. Against this sky, the two great mountain ranges which form the valley of the Jordan lifted themselves in the bare stately grandeur of unclothed form up to the everlasting snows. The absence of forests, the clearness of the air, the largeness of the foot hills, shoulders, hollows and crests, and yet their subordinate proportions to the great whole, the distinctness and distinction of all the forms that make up the gigantic bareness of the Wasatch Mountains had already given to Leon a new sense of the majesty of form unaccompanied by appeal to other perceptions.

Now, he saw all this through and up against this colored air as though a filmy veil had been laid over the eternal hills through which their bareness was softened and the dull dead grays, yellows and browns of bare rock and bare soil took on intensity and life.

Leon turned from this scene and went to his room to make some changes in his toilet; where, suddenly realizing that he was tired, he dropped full length on a couch near a window and fell asleep, the dying glow from the west on his face: and dreamed.

In his dream, Leon found himself standing in the dark, in a long, wide valley where, at first glance, the light was sufficient to show only that the floor of the valley was uneven and the encircling walls steep and high. The darkness was that of a clear night, without moon or stars.

As soon as he had taken in these features, he became aware of some one standing at his left. It was a tall being wrapped in a long gray cloak, who was a familiar person in Leon's strange experiences.

This being extended his arm and said:

"That pool is Mormonism."

Leon looked more carefully at the floor of the valley and discerned what seemed to be a lake of some dark, motionless material.

Immediately, there came from out of the darkness at some distance to the right a young and beautiful woman in evening dress. Leon saw her as plainly as though she stood under the brightest sun at noonday; and yet there was no light outside of her. The light by which she was visible was within her, shining through, radiating from her dark lustrous hair, her delicate skin, her graceful form, her rich attire.

The woman came toward Leon, stopped within a few feet and said:

"You think that to be a Mormon degrades the mind and debases the soul. I will go down into the lake and show you what Mormonism

is like. You will see that I shall come up out of the lake as fair and as pure as I am now."

Her voice was so sweet and her manner so charming that Leon felt his eyes fill as he looked at her, he was so grateful that such an one as she should try to teach him anything: and as she turned from him and approached the lake he watched her with absorbing interest.

She stepped into the lake and advanced to its center; yet the fluid barely reached to her knees. The being in the gray cloak was right: the lake was but a shallow pool.

Having reached the center, the woman laid herself down in the pool, until the liquid covered her, and then arose. As she straightened herself, Leon saw that some dark viscid liquid dripped from her coiled hair, ran slowly down her face and bare shoulders; and that her person and dress were spattered with some darker, harder material.

The woman gave herself one look, lifted her eyes to meet Leon's, and a convulsion passed over her frame. Then, with a gesture of despair, she lifted the train of her beautiful dress and began to pick the flakes from it; and some of the flakes were a foot or more square.

Amazed, Leon sprang forward to the edge of the pool and stooped to examine it. It was liquid human offal, crusted over with the harder parts.

With an indescribable loathing and horror Leon rose, stepped back a few feet, and fixed his gaze upon the woman.

She still stood in the center of the pool and was still trying to clean her person and dress; but she had grown old and haggard, and the light within her had waned.

Leon watched her until the light was utterly gone, and the woman was as dark as the pool in which she stood.

Then with a feeling of inexpressible pity and compassion, Leon turned to the being in the long gray cloak and made a gesture of entreaty.

That being's form expanded until in the darkness it loomed to giant proportions. Again he stretched forth his arm and pointing forward said:

"That pool is Mormonism."

The voice had changed. It was now strong, mighty, and stern as that of an avenging angel, biding his time.

Leon awoke. There was still time to dress for the late dinner: and as he hurried into his clothes, he wondered what he should do about the pamphlets and books which Mr. Steuben was to send him on the morrow.

But no books ever came, neither did Leon again meet Mr. Steuben; and as Leon had no further desire to study Mormonism he dismissed it from his mind. But he was not yet done with it.

An invitation came to visit at Crystal Lakes, where is a summer resort that is the Newport of Utah.

Three clear mountain lakes on three lifts of one valley,—the first about nine, the third about eleven thousand feet above sea level—lay ensconced in grandeur and beauty. Near the uppermost lake is a gigantic geologic hieroglyph, scrolled on a perpendicular cliff, flung eleven thousand feet in the air,—an immense tipped synclinal with some eight strata curved and folded like so many layers of ribbon; along the cliffs that border the valley are toy glaciers, each the source of an ice-cold rivulet; narrow breaks in the cliffs, called gulches, are filled with rock boulders and in the niches on their walls grow crimson primroses; on the slopes of the valley are fields where one may wade knee deep in forget-me-nots; and buttercups bloom at the edge of perpetual snows, their blooms keeping pace with the receding ice all summer long. The sunshine is hot at noonday, but step into the shade of a stunted pine tree and one is chilled to the bone.

Along the border of the lowest lake are scattered the dwellings,—rude cottages braced and buttressed with heavy timbers extended from their roofs to the rocks behind them to protect them from being crushed by the winter snows.

In June, when the first cottagers come, along the familiar paths are snow banks forty feet thick and the paths wind over them. The summer is the gradual dwindling of these and the following in rapid luxuriance of the wonderful carpet of flowers. Leon counted ninety-six dif-

ferent varieties in bloom in a single morning's walk. Such glory and swiftness and fullness of summer he had not seen before.

The mornings were spent in rambles,—one to a silver mine, seven miles across the range, in which the party walked through underground galleries for more than a mile following the vein, now thin as paper, now sixty feet wide. The evenings were given to parties, dances, cards,—the usual functions of society.

Among the cottagers was one family which especially interested Leon. The grandmother was the first woman to leave the Mormon church for conscience sake; and this she did when to leave was to incur the curse of Brigham Young and complete social isolation. One evening she told her story to Leon and Emma.

She was reared to think that a Mormon bishop's word was God's will, and not to be disobeyed without the loss of her soul. In girlhood she loved and became engaged to a worthy young man who was a few years her senior and of similar tastes. This engagement was ratified by both families. One day her mother received an order to give her in marriage as a second wife to a certain elder named in the note. This her mother did. The girl put aside her love and her lover and obeyed the order as of old martyrs went to the stake, not questioning that her personal self must be crucified to fulfill God's will to her in the saving of her soul.

The husband afterward married two other women and the four families grew up together. Brigham Young often publicly held them up as a model family for others to emulate; but the truth was, she said, that they quarreled and had a cat and dog time of passions and hatreds and jealousies as all other Mormon families did; but they happened to be all of them too well-bred or too proud to let outsiders know their private affairs. With this lady, Leon talked several times, always getting further and further into what seemed to him the secrets of superstition, and the loathsome vices that follow religious egotism. Mormonism, too, was founded on "visions" and "voices." This lady had had them in her youth, and so had her mother, who was converted to Mormonism by means of them.

Leon saw all his doubts returning. Was he but another? The place was beautiful, the people kind, and the opportunities for enjoyments too great and too rare for him to question then; but he knew what lay beyond these days. The end came too soon. The farewells said to noble people and noble scenery, our travelers resumed their way again; and, when after the transfers at Logan, they passed the last glimpse of Great Salt Lake, and started on the long dreary stretch of the Nevada desert, Leon gave himself up to his doubts.

His visions and dreams were certainly less instructive, less important in every way than

others he had heard of and read, but so far they had been singularly free from any taint of impurity or of vicious tendency, nor could he see that they tended to foster egotism in himself. He never thought of himself as appointed, set apart, or peculiar; nor did he have a mission or a new religion, or any reform to preach. The most he was conscious of was a desire to experiment, to investigate in the spirit and with the teachableness of a scientist. If he had some phases of consciousness that the majority were unaware of, their possession was no badge of superiority; it was only that he was one of many in whom those phases of consciousness were trying to focus.

A bad man could use any phase for bad uses, a good man for good uses. Why should the bad ones make the whole repellent? He had felt humiliated at the thought of ranging himself even indirectly and quite unintentionally on that side where were all spiritualists, mediums, slate writers, medical clairvoyants, fortune-tellers, and the whole mass of fraud that fattens on the credulity of men.

To offset this was the fact that the charletan and the quack are in all departments of life; this department had not yet its large following of sincere, earnest, capable workers. There were such he knew; but they were so few—to his knowledge—that they almost proved the rule to be as Prof. John Fiske had said,—that according to their testimony what survives the

body is of a quality that on this plane we shut up in idiot asylums.

Leon was young. Could he, he asked himself, give ten years to this and then attempt another life work if he failed? He was sufficiently acquainted with the competitions of life to know that a first-class success was highly improbable if begun so late; but he reverted again to the idea that he had a right to destroy what might be made of his life (was this believing in mental and moral suicide?) and decided that it would be easier to spend the last years of life a mediocrity than to carry through any common success the consciousness that he had missed the possibility of serving at a new task that was being set humanity; and one, too, for which he had some native equipment. He always came back to this native equipment, not as constituting a "call," but as a suggestion of differentiation which he had no moral right to disobey.

CHAPTER V

EMMA'S SECRET SURPRISED

The uneventful hours drifted by. There were the usual stops with opportunity to stretch one's lungs and one's legs, and sometimes a chance to snatch one of the many botanic and geologic facts that pushed for recognition all along the route. There was also some gossip with fellow travelers, but mostly Leon lived in his thoughts as Emma seemed to in her books. To Leon, after the first novelty of our stupendous west wore off, gazing from the car window was only a sort of self-hypnotization, a fixing of the outer attention to allow the inner to keep up its constant argument and revery; and if the truth were all told, there was more of the revery than of the argument. Emma, on the other hand, was keenly alive to every passing change in the landscape without and the people within the car; and her books were the filling in of gaps in these interests.

In the Mohave desert the engine broke down and there followed a wait of thirteen hours, in broad day. The heat was excessive, and the intolerable minutes lagged until the patience and courtesy of one after another of the passen-

gers gave out; and each one showed his barbarian stuff in his own peculiar way.

To Emma, interest in the sight made her forget her own discomforts, until their car was temporarily depopulated and then she suddenly realized how very tired she was. She moved languidly through the car and seated herself at the window farthest away from Leon; and for some moments looked out over the hot, treeless, bare, grayish yellow plain. Why she could not have told; but there arose in her mind the most luxurious, most full of life, most lovely scene of her life, and Jim.

She continued to gaze at the plain, but with unseeing eyes. He was traveling in Egypt and from thence would go to the far East, and she loved him. She reached out her soul to lean, not on Jim, but on her conception of the great whole—the mother of humanity. She put her elbow on the car window and laid her cheek in her hand, as though that hand were indeed the great mother's, murmuring, "For you I did it, for you."

Leon had been awakened from his reveries by the accident and thoroughly aroused to the present by his own physical discomforts and the various events among the other passengers,—those under his immediate attention beginning with the vigorous profanity of a burly German and ending with the arrant scolding tirade of a portly woman to the conductor of the train for not evoking for her, fakir fashion, a good dinner out of the bare desert.

He and Emma had seen no relief in becoming still more uncomfortable, and so by tacit agreement had remained when the other passengers sought distraction by "doing something" elsewhere. Leon was now observing Emma. He was not usually insensible to her good qualities, but it was not often that he conceded her any special superiority. He did it now ungrudgingly. Only one other woman in the long loaded train had behaved so well.

He stepped to the car platform and looked out; no one was near. Returning to his seat, he sprawled himself along it and called softly to the back of her head:

"Emma, why have you never married?"

She lifted her head and returned into the present. How disagreeable of Leon! What could have struck him? Several answers arose in her mind, each of which would have turned him off, but she was accustomed to transparent truthfulness to Leon. So far as she knew, she had not consciously told him a lie in all his life, save the one great lie maintained for so many years.

How oppressive the stillness! She heard the move as Leon pushed his arm to full length along the back of his seat; she almost heard him breathe. She looked across the dreary desert. Of what use to lie? She dropped her cheek once more in her hand and said softly:

"The taint."

Leon sprang to his feet and started toward

her; with her free hand she waved him back and he stopped where he was.

"Who? When?"

He saw the back of her neck and the line of her side face crimson slowly and deeply.

"To tell when would be to tell who; I rather not."

"Did—did you love as the great heroines do, the women in literature, Juliet, for instance?"

"How can I tell?"

After some minutes, in which Emma seemed to be counting her heart beats, Leon said:

"You could not; a Juliet would have remembered no taints."

"The women of the present sometimes feel duty so great a passion as to balance any and all other passions."

"I do not believe it," Leon said slowly, "but then I have never loved."

Leon returned to his seat, looked out for a time, then turned and fixed his gaze on his sister. He almost hated her, but he could not tell why, and he desired to find out. This which should have made him more than ever pity and love her repulsed him.

"Won't you tell me about it?"

Emma shook her head, but did not otherwise move. After a time she said:

"There's nothing heroic about it. It was not the amount of evil the taint would do, nor the greatness of the sacrifice: it was"—she faltered and then said hurriedly, "I could never

serve the whole conspicuously; the only thing I could do was—not to injure it."

"Did he love you?"

"Yes."

"And was it no harm to the whole to blight his life as well as yours?"

"Lives are not so easily blighted: they are limited or cut off from some phase of opportunity or experience, but other phases—perhaps that can come only because of the limit elsewhere—compensate."

"You're a fool."

She sprang to her feet and faced him. It was the first time that Leon had ever been conspicuously, willfully rude to her. He rose, drew himself up to his full six feet and returned her gaze. He looked at her as at something deformed, then turned, and strode out of the car.

In that gaze, a revelation had come to Emma that turned eight years into a lie. Jim had once told her that it was for Leon's sake she had refused him; and now she knew that it was true. It upset all her notions of herself. She had maimed her life inconceivably, irretrievably, not because of the taint or of duty to the whole, but because she had had a habit of love and care over this stalwart youth who, with one single exception, had shown quite as much capacity to take care of himself as even she could wish.

Leon came back, laid his cheek to hers and said:

"Forgive me; it would be heroic to do in silence the thing that could never be told."

Tears sprang to Emma's eyes. She shook her head. Leon took up her book and began to read aloud.

CHAPTER VI

MAN'S IMPOTENCE

Point Loma is a bold headland on the Pacific coast and near the Mexican border. Its perpendicular wall of rock has doubtless helped to form and to save the tongue of sand which, extending southeast of it, forms the southwestern side of San Diego Bay, and on which lies the little town of Coronado Beach. This is but a seashore hamlet of a few cottages,—a tourists' resort, with its one fine street ending at its great hostelry, Hotel del Coronado, which faces the sea, and was at the time of the events about to be related the best appointed hostelry south of Monterey.

In this hotel, on the second floor and facing the sea, two rooms had been occupied some time by a widow and her companion.

This widow was Mrs. Karl Gustaberg, and her companion, a distant relative in her family, was Miss Jane Bowers. Jane was nurse, lady's maid, cook, secretary, anything that the needs of her wandering mistress required; but she was always registered on hotel books and known as companion.

These two women had wandered up and down California for nigh on to eleven years. There were few good hostelries that did not know them; and they had long ago "done" all the scenery, visited all the resorts, experienced all that the usual routes and guides had to offer. They had acquaintances innumerable through whom they had tasted the more intimate life that is not offered to the stranger.

They had studied wheat raising, fruit culture and canning, wine making, horse breeding and training by residence on ranches devoted to these occupations and they had investigated some of the problems of irrigation and of Chinese labor. They knew also and from experience about how corrupt California legislation is, and how easily a bad man may ride down to posterity as a saint on the back of some charity.

All these had palled long ago. Given an unfulfilled desire and means to wander, and yet no power to win the desire, and you have a pretty good recipe for keeping out of the current of life.

Mrs. Gustaberg was out, not from choice, but from condition. The choice had been made for her. She had tried and failed to care for what people usually care for. She was too honest to deceive herself and too indolent to pursue what she could not make seem worth while to her own consciousness.

For society she cared as little as for knowledge or for occupations. She had none of the

widow's arts, and when offers of marriage came —as many did in her wanderings—she received them with mild surprise and dismissed them.

The only external things she cared about had always been essential to her existence,—clothes and scenery: the former must be soft, harmonious, luxurious; the latter bold and majestic. She had trunks of clothes and chests of accessories that accompanied or followed all her wanderings, becoming yearly more burdensome.

A beautiful garment that she had once enjoyed, she did not like to destroy; and the thought of another's wearing it was repugnant. She made many gifts, but always new ones. That no covetous servant should ever flaunt any of her old clothes was almost a principle, so fixed a part of her nature was the abhorrence of it. She sometimes visited the poor and needy and comforted them—out of her purse, never out of her belongings.

Her room was full of elegant trifles, so many of which she had that its entire adornment could be changed several times over. She liked variety and the new thing; but she could not let go the old: so that her impedimenta increased with years, until it threatened to be her master, as she was Jane's.

Poor Jane hated the stuff. Originally as fond of pretty belongings as her mistress, the packing, unpacking, bestowing, the never-ending drudgery of their care sickened and disgusted her: and it was partly on Jane's account that

latterly they had moved but twice a year and confined themselves to two places so that these belongings could part remain in one place, part in the other.

One of these places was a sequestered spot in northern California whence on clear days Mount Shasta's peak could be seen, and the other was Coronado Beach, where the fiercest storms break on Point Loma.

Some two weeks previous to the arrival of our travelers, Mrs. Gustaberg had taken to her bed. She was not sick, she declared, and refused to see a physician: she was only tired.

A couch had been arranged by a window and heaped with pillows, and there Mrs. Gustaberg lay all day looking at the sea: and sometimes she spent the night there, for she slept at no fixed hour. Usually the dark hours were passed in bed, the light ones on the couch, dozing or lying awake in revery, with no apparent note of time.

Jane was accustomed to variations in her mistress and for the first few of these days she waited on her and brought her meals, and was glad for herself of the respite from perpetual doing. But when the second week of it began, Jane pushed herself to some anxiety, tried to force a physician on her mistress, offered to read to her, to rearrange the room, to change her dress, to bring her new delicacies to eat. Mrs. Gustaberg insisted on being let alone; and on being dressed each morning in the same neg-

ligé,—a pale blue soft Japanese silk trimmed with Mechlin lace.

And it was so that Leon and Emma found Mrs. Gustaberg one bright, crisp morning in September.

Leon she would not believe was her son: she thought he must be some youth whom Emma had married, and was now trying to play off on her as a practical joke in extremely bad taste.

When finally convinced, she surprised them all by turning her face away to the sea and beginning to cry softly to herself. As neither Leon nor Emma could stop this, no explanations nor protestations apparently make any impression but to increase Mrs. Gustaberg's distress, Jane begged them to leave the room and not return until summoned.

"It's so awful sudden: you ought to have let us know; but she will be all right tomorrow," Jane said reassuringly. This she did to gain time.

Jane had one idolatory. It was Mrs. Gustaberg. She might grumble often, sulk occasionally, and once in a while rebel; but she allowed no one else to even think anything unkind or disparaging of Mrs. Gustaberg if she knew it; and that anyone could deliberately be cruel to her was unthinkable. Jane's wits were by nature not slow, but age and her occupation had stiffened them: so that when the unexpected occurred she was usually some time in taking it in.

So, after she had closed the door on Leon and Emma, she sat down to think, and presently she asked:

"Dearie, didn't you know?"

Mrs. Gustaberg shook her head. Jane went over to the couch, turned back a silk shawl that lay across Mrs. Gustaberg's feet, lifted them, and seating herself, held the feet in her lap and stroked them gently.

"Dear little one, how was it? Can't you tell? Jane would love to know."

Mrs. Gustaberg began to sob painfully. Jane lifted her, turned her on her back, put more pillows under her, a hot water bag at her feet, brought her wine, of which she took a few sips, and food which she could not be induced to taste.

When Jane had exhausted all the arts she knew, she undressed her mistress, put her in bed, and sent for a physician. The doctor said the patient had been running down, the shock of her children's coming unannounced had precipitated a low fever and certain nervous complications from which she would rally in a few days by the aid of a little quinine and a good tonic.

But Mrs. Gustaberg did not rally: almost imperceptibly she faded away.

Leon was in despair. He had expected to learn so much from his mother, to probe and explore her consciousness to and fro, and up and down, until he had possessed himself of its

contents, including what she knew of the causes as well as of the events of her life.

Now he was not permitted to speak to her, hardly to enter the room where she lay. His presence seemed to disturb her even in sleep, until Jane forbade him to enter the door at all. He would steal in sometimes unknown to anyone, in some hour of the night, just to look at his mother, only to produce always the same result,—Mrs. Gustaberg would begin to be restless and then sob, though apparently asleep.

On the third day, a consultation of physicians advised Leon, as he seemed to be the chief hindrance to recovery and Mrs. Gustaberg's nervous system was exceeding sensitive, not to enter even the corridor leading to her room and to try not to think of her; for in some subtle way his existence menaced hers.

Leon acquiesced much as a caged beast might acquiesce in its prison bars. Hitherto, he had generally gotten what he wanted. Now the one opportunity that he had craved ever since he began to think for himself was under his hand and he could not use it.

He paced the beach to and from the hotel to the inlet where the waters of the bay enter and separate this tongue of land from Point Loma: he went fishing in San Diego Bay; he visited a curious old mission some miles away; but for the most part, he ate his heart out in sullen misery on the piazzas of the hotel, hoping always to be summoned to her.

Try not to think of his mother! His whole being was one intense longing for her,—not to love her, not to do anything for her, but to squeeze her mind dry as one may a sponge.

Leon did not describe it thus to himself. He was not sufficiently acquainted with himself to do so. He thought his feeling a revival of his boyhood's passionate love coupled with immense regrets and uncontrollable need to know what she could tell him.

Six more days passed; and, ere the dawn streaked the east on the morning of the tenth, Emma came to waken him. Mrs. Gustaberg had asked for him but he must not talk to her: she was apparently much better, but very weak.

A few moments later he sat beside her. She had by request been lifted to the couch where he first saw her, and there she lay in the same blue negligè watching for the sun to rise. She did not look at him and he sat silently by, in the chair Emma had placed for him.

Mrs. Gustaberg had been a pretty woman, finely formed and delicately tinted; and Leon, on seeing her that first day, thought her but little changed from his boy memories. Now, in this early morning light, he noted all the ravages time had made, and how lusterless and shrunken was the once brilliant, dainty body.

Her hair was spread out over the pillow. He lifted one tress and drew his fingers along its length, thinking the while what a beautiful thing it had been. His mother's hair had been

the joy and pride of his childhood; and one of the special favors accorded him then had been the privilege of taking out the pins that held it, letting it fall, and drawing a comb through its shining, rippling, golden length.

Tears sprang to his eyes now as he held the partly gray, partly no color, faded, dead thing it was; and for the first time in his life a sense of age smote him with a sharp pain. His mother was old and no longer beautiful; and all living things must meet this same transformation.

Just then, the sun flashed across the sea, lighting up every crest, and Mrs. Gustaberg turned to meet Leon's eyes full of tears and the mystery of age and of pain. Her own did not fill, but she looked at him long with a peaceful direct gaze, as though she had passed beyond mysteries and tears. Then she looked at Emma, a few feet away, and at Jane, who sat at her feet.

The moments marched by in silence. The three waited for Mrs. Gustaberg to speak. She lay peacefully still, not a muscle of her frame moving save when she turned to face the sea and back again to face them.

Gradually the wrinkles smoothed out on her face and her color changed until she was almost beautiful again. And so she lay fastening her eyes on Leon, on Emma, back again on Leon, and then on Jane; and they all thought that when she looked at Jane she almost smiled.

Jane ministered to her and she acquiesced, swallowing the stuff as a child might. She spoke no word, but she seemed to be receiving an ever larger and truer understanding of Leon and Emma, until they felt as though she knew all their lives, all their thoughts.

After one of these, Mrs. Gustaberg turned with a little sigh and gazed once more at the sea, where the tide was now at flood, filling all the air with its deep boom. Then she closed her eyes and with a slight quiver of her body she went out on the long quest.

Jane knew: Leon and Emma thought she slept. When the truth pierced Leon's mind, he knelt and kissed her faded hands; and frantically, wildly begged her to come back and speak to him. Only the sea answered; and Emma led him away.

CHAPTER VII

A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE

Leon went up to San Francisco to see his mother's lawyer and to settle up her affairs.

As he came up Market Street from the ferry, he saw, some squares away, a young woman whom he knew. It was Charlotte Riderdale. He had not seen her for two years, and had not thought of her consciously for six months; yet it was now borne in upon him that he loved her. He watched her coming toward him with a strange exaltation: he noted every line of her figure, the movement of her walking, and was pleased.

He had met her in Berlin two years before when she had had a long braid down her back and dresses at her boot tops. He had not noticed her particularly; she was but one of a party to which he had belonged for a few weeks; that was all: and now he desired to marry her.

Since that day in the Mohave desert, Leon had had an undercurrent of desire to love and be loved, to possess and be possessed. Before he saw his mother, he had thought it impatience and longing for her; and during those painful

days at Coronado he had still felt it, and it had made part of his intense irritation at not being able to overcome his mother's state of mind and to absorb and use her at his will. When the awful calamity came, and Leon realized how powerless he had been and ever would be with reference to his mother, he alternated between rage and despair; but this longing was still in him. It was the hunger of his being, felt now for the first time, and it was imperious.

Leon Gustaberg had had fancies, enthusiasms, and friendships for girls much younger and women much older than himself; but he had not loved. He had seen other fellows in love; but the phenomenon had so little penetrated his consciousness that he had not even tried to observe or understand it, or wished to experience it.

Now, as he watched Charlotte Riderdale, he no more doubted that he loved her than he doubted his existence. It was the experience he had craved since that day when he penetrated Emma's secret. It was the satisfaction of his being. It was not an experience: it was a transformation: he was made over for the rest of his life.

So Leon thought; and did not know that he was simply having an intense reaction from the events of the previous days.

Seeing the girl about to turn down Kearney Street, he waved imperiously and started at a

swinging stride toward her. She stopped, hesitated, and turned to pass on; for she did not recognize him and thought he had made a mistake. Three more strides and he was at her side with hand outstretched.

"Miss Riderdale."

"Oh, Herr Gustaberg: how unexpected: I did not know you."

"Not Herr now?"

"But you are German, aren't you?"

"My ancestors came to Pennsylvania in William Penn's day. The first one married an English girl, their son a French Huguenot, and in each generation bloods have been mixed until there can not be much of the German left."

"You have the German style," she said, looking at him shyly from under a big hat.

"I am said to look like that ancestor who first settled under Penn's rule."

"Perhaps you are his reincarnation."

Leon almost stopped and looked at Miss Riderdale sharply; but seeing in her face that her remark was only a passing one with no beliefs behind it, he moved on beside her with a little sense of disappointment.

What did he expect of her anyhow, he said to himself. She was but a young girl. She could not divine and share his interests by intuition, in the first five minutes, before he had ever talked to her.

Thinking thus Leon became aware that Miss Riderdale had slowed her walk and had turned

toward him as though to take leave. Catching his eye she stopped and said:

"I have an engagement at this house and must bid you good morning."

"Am I not to see you any more, to lose you just as I have found you?"

Miss Riderdale's eyes opened slightly and she drew back a little from such evident demand, hesitated, and repeated:

"I have an engagement, I am sorry," and held out her hand.

Leon took her hand, looked down at her and said:

"Charlotte Riderdale, I love you; will you be my wife?"

Miss Riderdale flushed with indignation, withdrew her hand sharply, turned, ascended some steps, and rang a bell.

Leon started forward.

"Hang it all. Can't you understand that I am in earnest, that it means everything to me?"

But Miss Riderdale was passing within a door held open by an obsequious Chinese servant.

CHAPTER VIII

UP AGAINST CIRCUMSTANCES

Lawyer Ramsburgh was a small, red-faced, fat, wheezy, irascible old man; and he made short work of what he called Leon's pretensions.

"Jane Bowers I know, Emma Gustaberg I know, and Leon, the only Leon, died when eleven years of age. Good morning, sir."

Leon went back to his hotel, The Palace, and wrote to Emma to come up to San Francisco with the certificate of their mother's death and any papers she had found, and bring Jane Bowers with her.

After Mrs. Gustaberg's death, Leon, who thus far in life had apparently acted under Emma's initiative and guidance, took their affairs into his own hands and assumed control, in which matter, Emma, who seemed much broken, tacitly acquiesced.

Jane Bowers did not know about Mrs. Gustaberg's affairs. "The whole family always have been close about such matters," she had said when asked, but she thought there was a will: Lawyer Ramsburgh in San Francisco knew all about it. More they could not get from Jane.

So Leon bade the two women look over all the trunks, chests, and boxes that were stored at Coronado, select and save for his examination all papers, letters, diaries or documents bearing on family affairs or family history, and especially on his mother's experiences and thought; and dispose of all other possessions as Emma deemed proper.

Before the letter arrived from Leon asking the two women to come to San Francisco, their task had proved more fruitful than Emma had anticipated.

There were diaries, sometimes kept with scrupulous care from day to day, at other times with blanks weeks and even months long. In these diaries, Mrs. Gustaberg's special experiences were written out in great detail. In fact, those experiences seemed to have been the only reason for keeping the diaries; and Emma inferred that the blank spaces signified eventless days in her mother's mind.

There were few guests at Hotel del Coronado, little going on among them, and the recent bereavement was so respected that the two women easily preserved the solitude they both desired.

Emma, who had never lived by the sea and knew it mainly by a few ocean voyages, was daily more fascinated by the charm of enjoying its multifold variety with an absence of its power to annoy and disturb.

Sitting there by the window where her mother had died, Emma spent the slowly passing hours, in reading her mother's diaries, in gazing over the sea when inclined to think—and there was much in the diaries that provoked thought—and in giving directions to Jane when appealed to.

For Jane always had a trunk or chest or box in the middle of the floor, while several others stood about in various stages of emptiness or fullness while she sorted, classified and arranged for Emma's inspection and then carefully fulfilled the orders.

Miss Bowers was a well-born, well-bred woman whom the misfortunes and mismanagement of others had made destitute and lonely; and just at her sorest need Mrs. Gustaberg had offered her the place she had since occupied.

Mrs. Gustaberg had made plain at the beginning that there was to be no nonsense about the "companion business." Jane would be relieved of all care and anxiety about her personal existence; in return, she would be expected to do anything Mrs. Gustaberg wished done, no matter how menial nor how whimsical.

Miss Bowers was a proud woman; but her experiences had been bitter, and this offer would take her far away from all previous associations: so, after a night of stress, she accepted it; and having accepted meant to Jane Bowers no flunking.

For thirteen years, she had fulfilled her part of the contract faithfully; and from doing the tasks, she had taken on the habits and manners of an upper class servant,—self-respecting and respected, but serving, instinctively setting aside her will to obey that of another, until in some matters she no longer knew how to have an intelligent will of her own. Naturally affectionate, faithful, and domestic, Jane Bowers had lavished on Mrs. Gustaberg all the feeling of which she was capable,—Mrs. Gustaberg had been to her mother, husband, child, all she had missed in life; and now that Mrs. Gustaberg was gone, Emma would naturally take her place.

Jane Bowers hated Leon. She had scarce been able to make herself speak to him at all. He was beneath any words of contempt she could frame in her own mind, and her vocabulary of scorn was not scanty.

At first, this feeling extended to Emma, and Jane had inwardly resented with much indignation that Emma should inspect and order the disposal of Mrs. Gustaberg's possessions; and on hearing Leon's directions about papers and diaries, Jane secretly determined that not one of Mrs. Gustaberg's beloved diaries should ever fall into the hands of either of them.

She herself had never so much as peeped into, not even so much as lifted the corner of one of them, though she had handled, sorted—they were all numbered on the outside—

wrapped and packed them dozens of times; and now these strange, stranger children claimed the right to read them. It was sacrilege. She had seen Mrs. Gustaberg cry over them; and again when reading from them, raise to her a face that was not of this earth. No: they should not have them.

It so happened that Emma had taken up the keys lying near and herself unlocked a trunk while Jane was giving some further directions to the porter who had brought it in; and the first thing Emma's eyes lighted on were two of the diaries which had been put there in haste, without being wrapped up, by Mrs. Gustaberg herself, at one of their removals when Jane had been partly disabled by rheumatism to which of late years Jane had been increasingly a martyr.

With these two books, Emma seated herself at the favorite window and speedily became absorbed in their contents: so that she did not see Jane's start and stare, nor the varying expressions Jane's eyes hurled at her during the next few hours.

The numbered covers told Emma that there were others, and when she asked for them Jane grumbled and mumbled, and pretended not to understand, until Emma spoke her name a little sharply and looked at her. It was the look of old Karl Gustaberg which all who had served and most who had known him remembered as a look to be obeyed.

This unseen war went on for two days, until faithful, loving Jane had seen Emma weep over the books and seen too something of that other expression on Emma's face. Then she gradually relented and began to transfer her allegiance to Madam Gustaberg to this silent, self-contained, quietly masterful daughter who seemed to combine in herself the qualities of both the houses from which she had sprung. And as the days went by, Jane came vaguely to feel that, in some way which she did not understand, Emma was as much a victim of circumstances as Mrs. Gustaberg had been. It was the men, old Karl and young Leon, who were the causes of these circumstances—Jane said to herself—and she hated them both.

Before Leon's letter came, Emma had come to secretly share the desire—unknown to her—in Jane's mind that Leon should not know of the existence of the diaries; or—Emma added in her mind—know under certain well-defined conditions.

This necessitated another deceit. To Emma Gustaberg a lie was an abhorred disgrace. Yet she had been forced to lie in the greatest things of life,—love and life. She had lied about her own love and to the one she loved, beggaring him and herself with the exorbitance of it; and with two more lies she had taken two lives,—from her brother a mother, from her mother a son.

But for the sound physical constitution she had and the iron stuff her character was made of, Emma Gustaberg would have gone to pieces those days, sitting there by the sea, reading her mother's diaries, contemplating her brother's future.

On the past, she did not allow herself to dwell. When it came, as it did and would, she repeated to herself Lord Bacon's well-known lines, "The past is gone and irrevocable and wise men have enough to do with that which is present and to come"; and once in a burst of agony she had prayed for guidance about the future.

She was not a praying woman. For years a prayer had not passed her lips, not because she was irreligious, but because she was deeply conscious—or thought she was—that each man makes his own life; and prayers are usually little else than a phase of self-indulgence or of sentimental flunking. She would do the best she could—so she expressed it to herself—with what intelligence she had; and when a failure occurred or success was achieved take either as her due and neither return thanks with tears —what was it but cowardice and lies?—nor praise with elation—what was it but egotism? —any other person or power whatsoever.

Emma was by no means satisfied with the outcome of her father's plan, nor sure as yet of the wisdom of adding to the artificial web of her brother's life that she had been weaving at her father's command one more tissue. So

she put off the day of decision by answering that she and Jane could not come immediately, —that there was more to do than she had anticipated, and that Jane was not well and had to be favored. She could and would set Mr. Ramsburgh right, and there was no need of haste. She filled up the sheet with suggestions of how Leon could profitably and perhaps pleasantly employ his time in and about San Francisco. Meanwhile, she and Jane would complete their task leisurely—haste was unseemly under the circumstances—and write him when ready to start.

This letter made Leon Gustaberg fume and fuss and swear. "What the deuce was there so much to do?"

Prior to the last two months, Leon had been a calm and happy youth, carrying the events of his little world serenely, and capturing its prizes easily. Since early boyhood, he could not remember to have been in a passion. He had seen enough other people of all ages "tear a passion to tatters," and had often wondered how they could make such vulgar exhibitions of themselves, usually about such trivialities; and now he was himself, in two short weeks become a fussy, fumy, angry, profane man.

These stormy, imperious emotions were new to Leon's consciousness. He despised himself for their bluster and roughness, yet he wanted to feel them: he disliked to be vulgar, but could not rid himself of the vulgarity.

Leon did not understand himself. He did not wish a return of his old self, but he wished to conquer and possess his new self, to live as serenely as before, with use of the power the present suggested.

For Leon thought that what he felt was power balked of use. He did not know that it was his first consciousness of limitation. He had lived serenely because he had lived narrowly and protected by the serenity of a nature larger than his own,—that of his sister Emma.

Moving into a larger world, he had suddenly gone to pieces at the sight of his own impotence before the demands made upon him. It seemed to him that life had narrowed itself into a series of knocks against his well-being and happiness: while in reality, it had but put him to a series of tests of his fitness to live in a larger world.

CHAPTER IX

THE REARING OF CHARLOTTE

Mrs. Riderdale was seated by a window and in front of an open bureau drawer. She was alternately watching her youngest at play in the garden below and trying to select from the drawer, which was filled with lace, some that pleased her for the garment that was lying across a chair at her side.

The garment was of palest pink nun's veiling,—a house gown for Charlotte; and Mrs. Riderdale tried now pure white and now cream of various widths and patterns. Nothing seemed exactly to please. She missed Charlotte's assistance in these dainty decisions; and a vague trouble about Charlotte had been growing in her mind for two days.

This was to be Charlotte's coming out season and elaborate preparations were making for it. Already invitations had been received and accepted for functions in several cities across the continent,—Denver, Chicago, New York, Washington and New Orleans. In each of these places, relatives and friends were eager to assist in launching Charlotte on that social career which none of them doubted she would

had made her a favorite wherever she had been, and had led to the expectation that she would have an interesting social career.

Mrs. Riderdale looked forward to the coming winter, to be followed by a spring in London, with considerable zest. She expected to enjoy through Charlotte all that she had herself missed; and to demonstrate to her relatives and friends the wisdom of her method of rearing children. She not only expected Charlotte to have a career, but to behave in it in a superior manner.

It was of all this that Mrs. Riderdale was thinking as she sat selecting laces on this October morning. In an adjoining room two seamstresses were at work and the clitter-clatter of a sewing machine vexed the air.

A door opened and Charlotte entered the room. Without lifting her head, Mrs. Riderdale said:

"Come here, Charlotte, and tell me which you like best, this or this or this," laying across the delicate garment the three patterns she thought most suitable.

Charlotte crossed the room, touched one of the laces and said:

"This one is the most beautiful."

Charlotte then walked to another window and looked out. Mrs. Riderdale turned and looked at Charlotte, whose back was toward her, shook her head, and turned to put the other two laces away and to decide how to put on the one Charlotte had selected.

Charlotte half turned, took a step, stopped, and said:

"Mother, do you remember Emma Gustaberg?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I saw her brother Leon on the street that morning I went to Madam Courtelle's."

"I hope you asked him to call; your father and I would be delighted to see him."

Mrs. Riderdale was holding the lace this way and that, gathering it in knots and letting it fall straight, and did not look at Charlotte, nor apparently notice that no reply came.

"He seemed to us a very nice lad. Your father often said that if our Harry had lived he hoped he would have been like Leon,—so talented, so ingenious, so free from self-consciousness and self-assertion. Did you know that Leon took every prize at Paul Smith's, half the honors at Yale, and that his doctor's thesis at Heidelberg was something remarkable?"

"No; I did not know," replied Charlotte, who was moving restlessly in an ellipse of a few feet.

"Yes; Alice wrote of the thesis in her last letter; and when we were in Berlin one of the great professors at Heidelberg himself told me that a career was expected of Leon, that he certainly would do something to make himself known. And the best of it all is"—Mrs. Riderdale turned toward Charlotte, who turned and

with her back toward her mother picked up and set down again one article after another on her mother's dressing table—"that neither your father nor I ever heard an unpleasant thing said about him, which was a great deal; for that set in Berlin was as gossipy as any I ever met. Your father and I thought the Gustabergs the nicest Americans that we met in Berlin, almost the nicest that we met abroad."

"Then you knew they belonged over here?"

"Certainly. Why, your Aunt Laura knew his father, Karl, I think his name was. She danced with him at the Bedloe's great ball that you have heard her allude to so many times. He was expected to marry some brilliant society girl; and rumor had coupled his name with two or three, when he went off and married a country girl whom he came across on one of his business trips through New York State. It was said that she was very pretty with golden hair, pink cheeks, breath like new milk, and all that sort of thing; but neither well educated, nor accomplished in any arts beyond the milking stool and the spinning wheel. However, Karl—so Laura said—had enough learning and accomplishments for two. Perhaps Laura was interested in Karl herself, for she used always to be wishing she knew how the marriage turned out; but society lost sight of them."

Latterly, Mrs. Riderdale had given Charlotte what she called judicious doses of social gossip

in order to prepare her for the inevitable to come; and she thought this a fitting opportunity.

Charlotte had hitherto told her mother, without impulse or thought of reserve, all that befell her that was unusual; but she had not told her about that meeting with Leon. She had desired to and had gone to her mother's room several times with that purpose in view and then had let the open door to the dressmaker's room or any other trivial thing deter her.

She had come for that purpose now; but her mother's praise of Leon had made it harder to do. Her manner of meeting the event did not look quite so necessary and inevitable. If Mr. Gustaberg were so superior a man, perhaps his ways were better than she had read or heard of.

Charlotte had reproduced the occurrence many, many times over; and compared it to all she could remember from books, and it was so unlike—in a city street—a sordid street at that—in front of a couturiére's—without a warning—at a five minutes' meeting after two years of absence—and never any love making at all. She had gone over and over the thing in her mind, growing more and more annoyed as at some undeserved affront.

But this morning, on waking, it came to her that Romeo was not much more conventional. She had gotten out the book and read the tale before breakfast; and afterward come to her mother's room; and now that mother's praise rather fitted into the Romeo idea.

Mrs. Riderdale was deep in the intricacies of pinning the lace in place for the seamstress and had temporarily dropped other matters from her mind. This finished, she rose with the garment in her hand and turned to show it to Charlotte, when she was struck with the expression of Charlotte's back. She went into the other room, gave some directions, left the gown, returned, shut the door softly, and crossing to her daughter, laid her hand affectionately on Charlotte's shoulder and said:

"What is it, Charlotte?"

Without moving, Charlotte rehearsed the event in a rapid monotone as she had in her own mind fifty times.

"Have you seen him since?"

"Once; yesterday, but he did not see me."

"Do you wish he had?"

"I do not know."

"What did you think of him in Berlin?"

"I thought he was the handsomest man I had ever seen."

"Anything else?"

"No: I did not know him save by sight. He was always very polite to everybody, but had few necessary occasions to speak to me, and he made none."

"Had you remembered or thought of him since?"

"Not consciously; yet since that occurred I seemed to have known it was coming and I cannot get rid of it. I do not see"—she said

with rising impatience—"why I am unable to dismiss it from my mind, as I did what that fellow said to me about my riding—that day—you remember?"

"I will think it over. Do not trouble about it any more. Leave it to me."

"Did I behave badly?"

"No: you did well. I am proud of you; but I wish you to forget it for the present."

That evening at dinner, Mr. Riderdale said, addressing his wife:

"My dear, whom do you think I saw or thought I saw on the street to-day?"

Mrs. Riderdale gave Charlotte a warning glance.

"Who?"

"That splendid young Gustaberg whom we so much admired at Berlin."

"Where?"

"He was turning down Kearney just as I came up Market from the station."

Mother and daughter exchanged glances, and Charlotte smiled. Leon was evidently trying to meet her again in the same place.

"When?"

"Why, just after I got in on the morning train. I wanted to hasten after him and let him know we are here, but that Curtis cad button-holed me. I've meant all day to make the round of the hotels and look him up; but I've not had time. I'll do it to-morrow and bring him home to dinner if that will be agreeable to you."

Mr. Riderdale was deep in his soup, catching up for talking so much, and did not notice that he had not been answered until he had finished; then, looking up, he said:

"Why, mother, you have not answered my question about young Gustaberg."

Just then a servant brought a letter that had been left by special delivery for Charlotte; and as no such occurrence had ever been secret, Mr. Riderdale looked at his daughter to see her open the letter expecting to know its contents.

The handwriting was unfamiliar. Charlotte flushed and looked appealingly at her mother.

"Open and read your note, my daughter. It may be important and need an answer."

It ran:

"*Dear Miss Riderdale*:—Since Thursday morning, I have sought you by every means,—directory, hotel registers, postoffice—and failed to see your names or get clue of you until to-day, when luck favored me with a sight of your factotum Leary, whom I knew at once and from whom I got this address.

"What you have thought of my conduct on Thursday, I do not know, I do not like to try even to think; but Romeo did not wait and dance attendance for years before he spoke his mind.

"I am not a Romeo, but I want you as I have never wanted anything in this life before; and if you will give me a chance, I will try to win you, according to rule if you wish, much more

swiftly if you will allow,—but win you somehow and soon; for I have other matters on hand—great matters I hope—in which I wish your companionship and co-operation.

"I love you and I wish to take you for better or worse, so soon as you will allow me.

"I wait your permission to call and present my case to your parents.

"In purgatory with hopes that you will graciously lift me into Paradise.

"Yours until death,

LEON GUSTABERG."

Charlotte handed the letter to her mother, who read it, then dismissed the servant from the room—Temple did not dine with the family—and, with an inquiring glance at Charlotte, told Mr. Riderdale the occurrence of Thursday, and passed the letter to him. He read the letter and returned it to Charlotte without comment. The servant was recalled and dinner proceeded.

On the following day, Mr. Riderdale arranged his business affairs as for a two weeks absence. He then called on Leon Gustaberg, told him he had seen his letter to Charlotte and invited him to be his guest for two weeks on condition that no further pressure should be brought to bear on Charlotte.

This is how it came to pass that Emma at Coronado received, in rapid succession, two replies to her letter,—the latter granting her two weeks for the finishing of her task, and

dale's invitation, he determined to regard every member of the household, including the servants, as elements of the problem he wished to solve,—the pleasing of Miss Riderdale; and as necessary steps to the winning of his prize,—to make her his wife.

As the invitation necessarily suggested the possibility of his winning, since he was given the best possible opportunity, Leon at once became good-natured with himself; and while determined to allow no steps to escape him or fail of proper solution, he was restored to his former serene state,—not of self-assurance, but of that kind of power which has not failed.

His recent failures—he said to himself—had been unusual, precipitated suddenly; and although in relation to his mother irretrievable, both his mother and himself had been victims of a plot and neither was really at fault. He would manage his own life hereafter and no further failures should come from his not knowing the elements of the problem, nor from other people's trying to force solutions for him.

With these reflections, Leon had dismissed the whole matter of his past: and for two weeks, with the Riderdales he had renewed and enhanced the good impression that he had made in Berlin. The household was charmed, from the butler to the cat. Mr. Riderdale declared that if he had the pick of the world, he could not be better pleased for a son-in-law; but Mrs. Riderdale, although she would dearly like

to have Leon for a son, did not wish him to marry Charlotte. Why, Mrs. Riderdale could not tell, although she had badgered herself a good deal over the matter.

Mrs. Riderdale had generally found her feelings and hesitations of some value; and so, having this one, she was much exercised to find its cause while still it might be applied as a force.

She was, therefore, disappointed and hurt when the day after the return from Santa Cruz, Leon and Charlotte were formally engaged, and the wedding set for Christmas Day.

On arriving at San Francisco from Santa Cruz, the two weeks having expired, Leon returned to his hotel and from there the next morning had sent his formal written request to Mr. and Mrs. Riderdale. Later in the day he had called, met Charlotte, and all had been arranged; and through it all Mrs. Riderdale had been powerless to find a sufficient reason for voicing the reluctance she felt.

Mr. Riderdale, to whom she confided it, suggested that it was the spoiling of the winter planned for Charlotte, the losing all they had both hoped to enjoy with her and on account of her. He himself had had some longings and regrets about it.

Mrs. Riderdale shook her head, crossed the room, lifted a long cover, and two great drops fell upon the most beautiful garment yet made for Charlotte.

Mr. Riderdale followed and laying his arm affectionately across her shoulders, said:

"They'll all do for the trousseau."

Mrs. Riderdale looked at him and smiled through her tears. How little he understood. It was not the clothes that distressed her: it was what they represented. Her daughter would never be a débutante. She would pass directly from childhood to wifehood. She would lose all those charming experiences for which her mother had so zealously guarded and saved her,—those experiences by which she might have gained social knowledge and wisdom.

Mrs. Riderdale could find no other reason for her heartache than this, which was partly selfish and perhaps wholly foolish; for the greatest of all social experiences Charlotte was certainly having.

CHAPTER XI

EMMA'S RENUNCIATION

On that morning when, returning from Santa Cruz, Leon Gustaberg had parted from Mr. Riderdale and Miss Riderdale at the railway station, he found awaiting him at his hotel a letter from Emma.

He took the letter to his room, tossed it on a table there and forgot it. More important matters pressed him. On returning at midnight from the Riderdale residence, where all of his desires had been granted, he noticed the letter and picked it up; but some thought of Charlotte stayed his hand, and he laid it down again. Nothing should come then between himself and the thought of Charlotte. Tomorrow he would attend to business.

On waking the following morning, Leon's first thought was not of Charlotte; but of Emma and of the long years of her devotion and self-sacrifice on his account. Incidents which, at the time of their occurrence, he had been too young or too thoughtless to understand, now came trooping in long procession until he realized something of what a care he

had been, and how uncomplainingly she had been both mother and father to him.

In the midst of his revery, his roaming eyes caught sight of her letter. He leaped out, seized it, and returned to his pillow, where he read it. After that, he lay for an hour or more, heedless of time, his eyes fixed now on the ceiling, now on the open letter.

It was a simple enough letter:

"*Dear Brother*:—Our task is completed, save for some minor matters about which you may wish to exercise choice.

"Jane prefers to stay here and begs to be allowed to do so, at least until all the goods are removed. I shall leave at ten on Wednesday morning. I shall bring with me some diaries which you will probably think the most valuable possessions our mother left. I have spent the greater part of the past two weeks in reading them and in thinking about you. It has brought to focus a decision that has been forming for years.

"If after reading these diaries, you still wish to make certain experiments that you once spoke of—and I think you will—I am ready to go with you anywhere, serve you, guard you, help you, share and abet your experiments in any way you direct or wish.

"All that I am and that I have, I will give freely to make those experiments a success.

"Your sister,

EMMA."

For some moments, this offer seemed to Leon the greatest thing that had ever come to him. What Emma had hitherto dissuaded him from, what she had given years of her life to protect him from, she now offered to give herself to unreservedly; and he knew that, having offered this, she would follow and obey as singly and unflinchingly as she had hitherto led and commanded.

She had given herself to him for twelve years, at what cost he was beginning to conceive. She now offered to give herself for the remainder of life.

Something in his mind told him that nothing like or equal to this would ever come again; and almost he was persuaded to take Emma at her word, and flee from the dream of the past two weeks. With Charlotte, what he cared most for he was in danger of losing: with Emma, he would win if winning were possible to him.

At this point he suddenly swung off. Emma did not believe, never had believed. She had the cold willingness of a scientist to give and that was all. At every step her critical faculties would be weighing evidence, scrutinizing means, drawing logical conclusions, with unfaltering passionless accuracy. He told himself that this was what he needed, what he desired, but he shrank from its emotionless pitilessness.

No: he couldn't. It might do for Emma, but not for him. He could not have her merciless intellectual eyes upon him, even if they did

look out of the kindest, most patient physical eyes he had ever known.

He must have freedom and love and enthusiasm and faith. Charlotte was young and innocent. She could be led to believe; and together they would enter and win as youth and love united ever must. Then Leon dressed and went to Charlotte.

When Leon met Emma at the Oakland Station two days later, she noticed an unusual excitement about him. She was not left long to wonder. As soon as they reached the hotel and Leon had led her to her room, he closed the door behind the porter who had brought up the bags, and with his back up against it, said:

"Emma, I am engaged to be married."

Emma was at the mirror removing her hat. She turned, hands arrested, and looked at Leon until he had repeated the statement. She turned again to the mirror, and the hat being free, she sank into the nearest chair, the hat in her lap.

After some seconds that seemed hours, Leon poured forth a rapid survey of the occurrences of the past two weeks; and ended by kneeling in front of Emma, taking her two hands, regardless of her hat, and giving a sort of rapid, brief resumé of the best parts of his thoughts on the morning that he got her letter; and added that now that he had Charlotte, she would be released to live her own life.

Since entering the room, Emma had passed through several, successive, opposite shocks. To

know that Leon's fiancée was Charlotte Riderdale was about to balance the fact of his getting married; and the notion that this marriage would forever banish those dreams and visions and set him in the ordinary grooves of life atone for her own great offer of renunciation, —when Leon precipitated the fact that he still dreamed of following his dreams, only that Charlotte was to take her place.

Leon's words of gratitude to her after that fell on unhearing ears. Emma's mind was seeing a stalwart form in dusty duck standing before the sphinx.

Returning from this, Emma bent and kissed Leon's glowing, earnest face as a mother might the face of her only child dead; rose, went into her bedroom, and softly closed the door.

CHAPTER XII

A STRANGE WILL

Lawyer Ramsburgh was hard to convince, even with convincing proofs before his eyes, as Emma and Leon realized when they called on him the morning following Emma's arrival in San Francisco.

When convinced, the lawyer retired to an inner office and swore until his blotched face was purple; and throughout the early part of the interview, in spite of Emma's presence, he was occasionally violent, and he kept up, as undercurrent, a pretty steady flow of profanity in a sort of muttered whisper.

Mr. Karl Gustaberg, Lawyer Ramsburgh had never met; but he had had some business relations with him through another lawyer, and at that lawyer's death he had come into the management of Mrs. Gustaberg's affairs, some eighteen months after Mr. Gustaberg's death.

From that time on, Lawyer Ramsburgh and Mrs. Gustaberg had become increasingly intimate; and it was long since the lawyer had supposed there was or could be anything new to learn about his client.

Mrs. Gustaberg had seemed, to all who met her, to be a frank, sincere, transparent woman; yet those who met her more than once or saw her year after year at last confessed that although apparently always on the edge of becoming intimate with her, they had never passed the barriers of conventional acquaintance. Even Jane Bowers, her constant companion, was so excluded by this unvarying reticence that she knew nothing, even by surmise, of the nature of that portion of Mrs. Gustaberg's life and daily thought which made her death such a calamity to Leon.

Why, then, she should have made an exception of this crusty old lawyer, neither of her children could divine. Lawyer Ramsburgh himself could have told them; for hearing their tale, he had in Mrs. Gustaberg's many confidences the reverse of the picture; but their past conduct so irritated the old man that he swore to himself by every oath he knew—and he knew most of those on the Pacific coast—that they should get nothing out of him.

There was a will which he would have suppressed had he not seen that Emma was disposed to call him to account before the courts.

It was a strange document, written on thin large, blue paper, in Mrs. Gustaberg's own clear, fine, but childish handwriting and duly sworn, as attested by three witnesses. It had been in Mr. Ramsburgh's safe nigh on to six years; yet it still exhaled the faint sweet odor

of attar of roses,—Mrs. Gustaberg's favorite scent. It ran:

"I, Clara Bowers Gustaberg, by the grace of God, widow of the late Karl Earnest Gustaberg, who departed this life January 7, 18—, being in usual health and condition of mind, of my free will, without entreaty or compulsion from man living or dead, do hereby, according to the laws of the State of California, and of the United States, and of the greater laws of God, devise as follows:

"To my children, living and dead, and to the Earth Mother, I leave all that I have and all that I am:—to wit,

"My spirit to my son Henry, who departed this life September 12, 18—. He was the noblest of my children, the most fitted to rule; and with my spirit added to his, he will be able, in his next incarnation, to overcome all obstacles and reach the highest goal of his ambition; so help him God.

"My mind, with all the appurtenances thereof,—namely, my books, pictures, music, musical instruments, and diaries—to my daughter Charlotte, who shall become my daughter after my death, by marriage to my son Leon, who, though now dead, shall be resurrected in the fullness of his manhood.

"My soul to my daughter Emma, who, although she has been cruel to me, has been so because her soul is strong enough to overcome emotions and to follow the commands of her

spirit. 'To her that hath it shall be given, and she shall have abundance.' Also to this same daughter, Emma, I bequeath my clothing, jewels, the furniture, ornaments and accessories of my toilet, and all objects that belong to my social life and correspondence; for these belong to the soul.

"My body, I give back to the great Earth Mother, from whom it came. It has been renewed by the beauty and the products of every place where I have lived; so I direct as follows:

"My heart shall be taken east and buried under the roots of the oak tree which stands by the east door of the house where I was born, in South K——, New York.

"My lungs shall be buried in the center of the grave of my son Henry, in the old cemetery near where my married life was mostly spent, at Ford's Hill, Missouri.

"The rest of my body shall be burned in the open air, and the ashes given to Jane Bowers, who shall make a pious pilgrimage to every place that together we have visited in love.

"On the threshold of every house where we have received hospitality, she shall drop a bit of my body's ash, saying the formula I have taught her: 'Unto all who have offered rest with a pure heart, rest shall be given.'

"Into the sea and the streams and the springs, under trees, by waysides, in gardens,—wherever we two have lingered in love, there shall she drop some ash, until I, the body, be

restored unto mine own again; for the ash of a body that has not violated the eternal order is able to draw all the forces of the said body back into the eternal arms of our beautiful Mother, where there are no tears nor heartaches, no diseases nor weariness, no violence nor hatred, no repulsions and no marriages. Amen.

"As to the houses and lands, mortgages and stocks, and all so-called possessions which my old friend Martin Ramsburgh has the care of, they shall belong to whomsoever is able and willing to take them. I charge the said friend to apportion them strictly according to law to my survivors, with whom they shall remain or not according to the will of the gods; for no mortal may hold that which is not his own, nor for longer than he has rightful possession.

"I, Clara Bowers Gustaberg,—known unto God by some other name—do hereby, having disposed of all that I have and am, declare my selfhood discharged of further obligation; and when, in God's own time, the dissolution shall finally come, I trust, by the various disposals I have made, to free myself from being, from the necessity laid upon all being to reincarnate and continue the weary way. My parts are willing to live, but I the combination am not. Therefore, by the power vested in me by God, I do declare the self null and where it has existed let there be an everlasting void.

"Thus shall the eternal self be freed from a point of pain; for unto him who, after succes-

sive incarnations, cannot control his being, overcome his environment, and go on from triumph to triumph,—unto him, it is permitted to dissolve if he desire.

"God does not force the annihilation of any, even the most rebellious and unhappy atoms of his being. Real dissolution comes only to him who in great joy and humility accepts what is permitted and by his own fiat dissolves and scatters that which through ages he has gathered and so laboriously bound together.

"This is the greatest service a mortal self can do the immortal, eternal self to whom be praise, power, dominion, and service, forever without end. Amen.

"CLARA BOWERS GUSTABERG."

Lawyer Ramsburgh read this will aloud and when he finished, tears were rolling down his cheeks. To him, the will and all those strange experiences which Mrs. Gustaberg had narrated to him with such glowing fullness were profound with mystery; and not being a conceited man, he had yielded reverent allegiance to that which he did not understand. Moreover, being pure throughout of the ordinary vices and vagaries of men, he thought it might be of sanctified origin.

Leon was both elated and depressed. Charlotte's name and the prophecy of his resurrection seemed proof of unusual powers; but if so much, why not more, and why error in this? Then the idea that any mortal could dissolve

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his being at will was inconceivable. And why was his mother a painful atom? He did not credit that his mother could possibly have known about these matters, and her seeming to know—

He was torn again by all of his old doubts, when lifting his eyes, he caught Emma's gaze. He started to his feet and turned to look out of a window that faced a back yard and interminable roofs. Emma had preserved an unruffled exterior through the exasperating opening of the interview with the lawyer; and now she had been unmoved by the reading of the will. He hated her and this hatred drove him back to a solemn elation of kinship with his mother.

To Emma, the will was but the saving hand drawing her away from the eddy of her mother's consciousness into which the diaries had almost drawn her; and back into the wholesome current of common existence.

Lawyer Ramsburgh was speaking.

"And you could live a lie for twelve years to a woman like that?"

"I obeyed my father who knew my mother better than I. He thought—"

"She was insane. So did I at first, fool that I was. We are all fools compared to such as she."

He then proceeded to tell them how sane Mrs. Gustaberg's judgment in all ordinary matters was, how full of delicate, gentle chari-

ties her last years were, how pure and free from blame and all scandal her life had been.

This recital, interspersed with anecdote, was a pathetic pleading by the old lawyer of the merits of his friend and client, and to her own children, that they might be convinced and give her now that affectionate reverence they had denied her in life.

During it, Leon turned to watch his sister and felt his repulsion to her rising until he ended by exulting in the fact that he need not accept the offer in her letter; he had Charlotte.

He did not see that his attitude toward Emma was as much at fault and as cruel as had been that of his father toward his mother. After twelve years of mothering and great sacrifices, he was ready to leave her utterly alone in the world, while he should go on from joy to joy, as he fondly hoped.

CHAPTER XIII

A WEDDING

On the following morning, Emma Gustaberg awoke to the sound of rain. A great peace was upon her. Whence it came, why it was, she could not tell. She felt young; and as she surveyed the consciousness of her parts, she wondered drowsily; for it was as though she had been reborn in the night, had skipped childhood, and was in the first flush of her young womanhood again. She feared to move lest the delicious sense of youth and harmony in all her members should depart. She joyed in it. She had not felt its like in years. She lay still in the dripping darkness and felt it increase, as she were a clod of the long parched earth being gently softened by the falling rain.

She sprang up and opened the window. Warm as summer and full of the breath of the sea whence it came, the rain swept past. The wind was rising, the storm increasing. It would probably last all day. This pleased her; the new sense in her asked repose, not to act nor to think, only to be.

Yesterday had been so hard. She had read her brother's varying emotions and adjusted

herself to them as had been the habit of years. He was showing new phases these days, but so far she had understood fairly well. One fear had aroused her anxiety. The opportunity to ask had come and been allowed to pass; to ask seemed such an arraignment of Leon's character. But she must: it had made her hot to think of it yesterday, and she had promised not to shrink when the next opportunity came. Leon was still so young, she had said, half excusing with a little sigh.

She reviewed other days too, stretching back, even to their leaving Heidelberg: so many of them had been hard. Then she reviewed all that she knew of her mother, and again as yesterday felt drawn to the old lawyer for his plea: her mother's life and fate were so sad.

But now, as the gray day broke on the increasing storm, Emma could not make herself care for any of these matters. She reviewed and realized them as in a dream: all strenuousness and personal feeling were gone.

She was obliged to shut out the storm and fold about her a warm robe; but she still sat beside the rain beaten window motionless and happy in a sense of detachment from all her past, of release from bonds, of newness of being. All fair and lovely sights of her life came to her in that dreary, storm-locked hotel room. Nature was in a tumult, increasing in intensity, while deeper and deeper grew her sense of peace and well-being.

She rose and took from a closed compartment of her trunk, a long package carefully wrapped in many folds of dark blue tissue paper. This package she placed on the bed, dreamily unfolded the papers and paused before the last sheet. Her mood had been so unusual she shrank from its destruction. Yesterday evening she had looked upon this as an ordeal, perhaps beyond her to bear, and now—Leon had yesterday requested her to lay aside the mourning she had put on at Coronado, and appear in some festive gown to dine with the Riderdales the next evening, lest the suggestion of sorrow should mar Charlotte's joy. Emma had remonstrated, not because the symbols of mourning had any personal meaning to her, but because it was her habit to yield a cheerful obedience to social custom; and great as the occasion to change was to Leon's mind, it hardly seemed to justify such apparent insensibility to older and as yet more paramount claims.

But she had yielded; and was then confronted with the fact that but one gown of her former wardrobe was at hand, and that one only because she had not been parted from it in eight years. Must she lay rude hands on even those memories for the pleasure of this brother of hers?

It was that gown which she now hesitated to look at; but her present mood made the hesitation seem more like a putting off of joy than

of pain. Everything dissolved in the wonderful alembic that this morning was.

She lifted the last cover and something touched her cheek like a delicate joyous caress and moved down through her body tingling as it went, like some pungent perfume, and filling her being with wave upon wave of pulsating joy.

She lifted the garment, shook out its long folds and turned to her mirror. She had looked old and haggard of late; but the glass told a different tale this morning. She could wear the gown. She rang for a maid, dispatched an order for flowers, and proceeded with certain freshening devices with a keen sense of pleasure in each detail. Her heart was singing; yet she was alone and apparently bereft of all she had cared for.

Leon was away from the hotel the greater part of the day; and Emma passed the hours in reading and watching the storm, in a mood of happy, pointless, undifferentiated consciousness of being.

By evening the storm had so increased in fury and cold that Leon offered to excuse Emma from venturing forth over the hilly streets even with the safest of drivers; but she laughed and declared herself delighted to go.

Arrived at the Ridersdales, they were received in the library, lighted only by the blazing logs on the hearth. It was a family custom to enjoy storms in flickering firelight.

At dinner, Leon and Charlotte were seated opposite Emma; and both were struck with her fairness and beauty. As dinner progressed and the talk drifted on, it seemed to Leon that he had never known or appreciated Emma until now; Charlotte was seized with an almost passionate longing to be understood and loved by Emma and determined to ask Leon to induce her to live with them—she would not then so much miss her mother; and Mr. and Mrs. Riderdale exchanged glances in which each understood the other to find fresh congratulation in realizing how unsually fine a woman Leon's sister was.

After coffee in the library, the talk drifted to art and they all went to the drawing room to see a picture by Corot which Mrs. Riderdale had brought from Europe as a present to her sister, Mrs. Schuyler, whose house they were occupying in her absence on a trip to the Sandwich Islands.

In the drawing room was a blaze of light, and there Leon was struck by Emma's gown. Where had he seen it? Oh, he remembered: it was at the British Embassy ball in Berlin, where as a lad he had been allowed to go because one of Emma's friends had arranged it.

The dress was white crepe, delicately embroidered in gold thread and then, as now, she had worn yellow roses at the corsage. Her hair had the same golden glint. Emma's hair was not like their mother's, yellow and wavy;

but brown touched with gold gleams, and straight, abundant, shining, full of life. Altogether she was good to look at.

Again, Leon's absorption in Charlotte seemed to unwrap itself and move aside, as it were an enveloping cloud, and leave his soul naked, unmated, and crying out that with Emma alone would it be safe.

The great knocker clanged and the storm burst in with the opening door, putting out the hall lights and blowing the stranger into the shaft of light from the drawing room.

Mrs. Riderdale, who was nearest the door, came forward with greeting and then sent Aaron with him to Mr. Riderdale's room, whence presently he reappeared, a stocky, well-made, sun browned man of forty, with keen gray eyes which falling on the group at the far end of the room seemed spellbound.

Mr. Riderdale and Miss Gustaberg were looking at a picture, moving this way and that to note the effects of different lights and positions and Leon and Charlotte were in their rear, following them but looking rather at Emma than at the picture.

Suddenly, although no word had been spoken, Miss Gustaberg turned and met the gaze regarding her. Her being seemed to liquify and but for a near chair she must have fallen. Mr. Riderdale and Charlotte started forward with the cry of "Jim." Then Emma lost herself. When she came to, after what

seemed to her a long lapse of consciousness, in reality a few seconds in which no one had noticed anything unusual about her but the deadly pallor of her face,—Jim was kneeling in front of her, his face looking up into hers. She could not have masked herself then to have saved her life.

"Dearest, it was a lie?"

"My God, my God, forgive me?" she said, looking not at Jim, but at her hands lying limp in her lap.

Mrs. Riderdale had seen the focus of Mr. Hubbard's gaze, followed by Miss Gustaberg's collapse and pallor and remembering a bit of Berlin gossip was the first to understand. So she drew the others back to the firelit library and left the two under the blazing lights.

Mr. Hubbard hesitated a moment; then touching her dress, the gold embroidery, the roses, he said:

"How comes it that you wear this to-night, after eight years?"

"Circumstances caught me—" she stopped: there was too much to tell in one sentence—"I have not worn it since that night you asked of me the last dance."

Then suddenly the foolishness of having kept the gown struck her. What would he think? She rose to her feet and stepped back. He rose also and the two faced each other, Miss Gustaberg forcing herself to stand and to meet his gaze, while wave after wave of color enveloped

her as she endured all the miserable humiliation of her sentimental silliness.

Mr. Hubbard did not connect her evident distress with what she had just said; and he felt his heart gripe and his knees grow unsteady with the thought that she might be married and this surprised betrayal be a thing she could never forgive him.

At least, having gone so far, she should see his heart. He turned, touched a tiny spring that locked a chain around his neck and drew forth a small flat gold flask with a long chain depending from one side. He hesitated an instant, then faced her as a soldier might his superior officer on parade, and said:

"In this is all that is left of the yellow roses that you wore. You remember that I begged them. When I found that I could not carry them on my person and preserve their form I reduced them to powder and put the dust in this which has lain on my heart day and night for nearly seven years."

Again Miss Gustaberg reeled to fall; but he caught her, placed her gently in a chair and stood waiting, the flask forgotten in his hand.

The gladness that possessed her was killing her. He had put her in a great, high backed, old colonial chair. She leaned her head back, closed her eyes, and let emotion have its surging way with her. The minutes passed. Was he still there? She opened her eyes: he had not moved. He was a present, vivid reality. She reached her hand:

"Give it me."

Wondering he placed the flask in her hand. It was still warm from his body and he blushed like a school boy and would have taken it back, murmuring:

"I, I ought to clean it," though it was speckless; for it was his one belonging that no one else ever handled and yet was never neglected. The polishing of the flask had been a kind of sacred rite.

Miss Gustaberg looked at it, laughed a happy girlish laugh, lifted it to her lips and then let it slide into the depths beneath her gown, down under the roses.

He was at her feet again, this time reverently kissing the hand that had held the treasured flask of yellow rose dust.

"My steamer goes out with the morning tide. I should be on board by midnight. Will you go?"

He then told her that he had accepted an appointment in the diplomatic service, had been ordered to report to his chief in Japan without unnecessary delay, had stopped in Washington to get certain documents to be left at Honolulu, and after waiting there the issue of the business represented in the documents was to go on to Yokohama.

"No: I cannot go to-night, though I would if I myself alone were concerned. If your business is likely to detain you at Honolulu over a steamer, I will join you there. When does the next one leave?"

"In two weeks."

"I shall be ready."

They rose and stood looking into each other's eyes, holding each other's hands. He suddenly pressed her hands almost to pain.

"May I call you Mrs. Hubbard before I go?"

"To-night?"

"Yes."

She caught her breath quickly and drew back; then, catching his eyes, smiled and said:

"Certainly."

"In the little flask with the rose dust is my great grandmother's wedding ring. Will you consent to be married with it?"

The end of the chain still dangled over her corsage. She drew the flask, this time warm with her heart beats, and laid it in his hand. He opened it, the while telling her some family history, and gave her a thin hoop of gold on the inside of which, now almost beyond deciphering, was the inscription "James and Emma 10-3-1765."

"That is why I begged the ring of my mother and put it with the rose dust."

Mrs. Riderdale had one superstition,—the bridal veil; so a beautiful old heirloom now belonging to her sister, Mrs. Schuyler, was, by aid of the whole household, at last found and draped about the bride. Meanwhile a clergyman had been sent for and arrived.

Then, there, in that stranger's house, in the stately ball gown of white and gold and yellow

roses, with Mrs. Riderdale's great grandmother's wedding veil and the equally ancient ring, James Sterling Hubbard and Emma Gustaberg were married. Mr. Riderdale gave the bride away, Leon and Charlotte were best man and maid, little Temple, his sleepy, brown eyes large with excitement, and his mother were the guests; and the assembled servants hovered in the rear excited by the romantic occasion.

The house had been ransacked and a feast set forth; but no one could have told what he ate or drank, so full was each of a sense of the poetry and fitting beauty of all that had occurred, though only Leon and Emma knew how opportune it had been.

Mr. Hubbard silently unfastened the yellow roses that Emma wore, placed them inside his waistcoat, folded his great coat over, lifted her hands to his face and turned away. Emma felt that her hands were wet and did not know that she, too, was weeping.

She followed out to the door, but the carriage was away ere she could reach the edge of the balcony. The storm had ceased, and the winds of heaven high up were breaking and hustling the clouds eastward. As the last sound of the carriage wheels died in the silent streets, she noted this fact and lifted her eyes to the rain-washed sky.

The morning wind fluttered her garments and wrapped her about with a sweet, clean freshness. She inhaled it with delight; and

even as she gazed, the last clouds were swept from sight and the vault of night was serene.

The air had a rare clearness, and the darkness was as some deep pile of boundless, velvety softness against which the stars glowed innumerable, resplendent, wonderful.

Emma Gustaberg Hubbard now felt her joy as an abiding kinship with this measureless beauty, and in consequence she asked the right of care over her separated being.

She was no longer a single, but a double unit; and either the earth beneath her feet or the worlds over her head owed to her the bringing of her parts together again.

CHAPTER XIV

A PROMISE

The next morning Leon and his sister, Mrs. Hubbard, started for Coronado. After being comfortably seated in the cars, they talked about the country they were passing through, the places the train halted at, some legends of early Spanish possession, followed later by mixture of Mexican blood, tales of the gold fever, and some recalling of incident from Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast,"—the courteous entertainments of polite acquaintances; while in the mind of each was the same uneasy ghost.

At last, after a silence of unusual length, Emma said:

"Do they know?" Leon shifted uneasily.

"No: why should they?"

Emma looked at her brother intently, as if loath to accept the implication of his words.

"You have taken up the acquaintance where it ended in Berlin, as though that were yesterday and nothing intervened?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

Again that uneasy movement, this time followed by silence.

"Why?"

Leon who had, during this conversation, been apparently absorbed in the landscape, now turned and looked his sister full in the face.

"Must I answer that question?"

"I am sorry—but yes—you must."

"How must?"

"Because" — Emma colored deeply — "it seems that you are putting heavy mortgages on the future."

"I do not see it that way."

"What do they know about that work which you wish to do, and are so eager to be engaged on that you hasten Charlotte's marriage?"

"They would not understand if they were told."

"All the more reason for telling."

"Look here, Emma, do you suppose I don't know all you are driving at, and have not thought it over a hundred times. Can't you give a fellow a chance?"

"Have you given them any chance?"

"Would you ask me to destroy myself?"

"Is it so bad as that?"

"I do not know whether it is or not. I have been happy and I intend going on being so."

"At the risk of catastrophe when it is too late to save anybody concerned?"

"Excuse me." Leon rose and disappeared beyond the car door; but he soon came back, seated himself beside her and said:

"Mayn't we have some of the old pleasant times together in the few days before you leave?"

Emma took a sudden resolve.

"Leon, I shall not go until they know."

"Good God, Emma; you tempt me to wish Mr. Hubbard had carried you off last night."

"He would but for this."

"And you stayed"——

"To save you from a rashness that might cost you everything you care for, your work and your happiness."

"It is just to protect my work that I don't tell them."

"And the happiness?"

"I can take care of Charlotte."

"But taking care of her is not making her happy."

The train rattled on, while Leon stormed within himself and Emma waited. At last Leon said brokenly:

"I don't like to be unfair, but this is not an ordinary case. If I make a clean breast of family history and personal intentions, the Riderdales will think me—you know what they'll think, and I shall not have any chance at all."

Emma was shocked that Leon allowed himself so much hopelessness. It argued so ill for his success. A swift movement of pity took her. She laid her hand on Leon's arm and said:

"Tell me just what you have intended."

"You see, when the business with Ramsburgh is settled, I shall have ample means for living in retirement as we shall at first. If the parents do not know, they can not prejudice anyone nor hinder anything. I take Charlotte away, get her happily settled, and then, gradually, as occasion rises, prepare her to know, and when she is ready open experiments can begin."

"Suppose she is—what you call prejudiced?"

"She is young, she loves me, she will change and believe."

"Our father did not."

"Oh, Emma: do you not see that what you wish would paralyze me; that even if they should take the most favorable view, their knowing and expectations would put bonds on me; and unless all are bound to secrecy, others will come to know and a certain publicity and vulgar curiosity penetrate our retirement, and then every crank will wish to seek me out and fraternize? It makes me sick to think of it. I cannot do the thing unless I can do it under cover."

"Mr. and Mrs. Riderdale will keep the cover safe enough."

"But I don't want even their thoughts following me. Every scientist, not only is conceded the right, but claims the privilege of working in secret. Even Charlotte need not know if there were no personal experiments and conditions that some one must share. She

will be better than any other assistant because her own happiness and life will be bound up in it."

"Could you engage an intelligent assistant without his knowing what you expect from him?"

"Of course not. This is different."

"The assistant could leave when he wished."

"I'm not taking her just for that."

"It might be easier for her if you were."

"It's no use, Emma. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I am not going to do it."

The hours and the train sped on. Had regret been of use, Emma would have indulged it about incidents that in passing she might have turned to other use than what they had received; but she must face things now as they were. The diaries troubled her most of all: she might have kept them from Leon.

She settled in her mind that Leon's life and all evidences of their fateful inheritance must be turned over to him, not that she wished to shirk, she would gladly have carried the whole if she could—but she saw that victim as he had been in the past, the least that could be done now was to give him all possible opportunity. She could no longer take risks for him nor lead things to him by gradual approach. Leon must shoulder the whole burden and at once. And the Riderdales must know, even if she told them: there must be no mistake about that.

These decisions, Emma gave to Leon the next morning; and after some further argument, he yielded with his old time grace.

There followed ten days of pleasant *comaraderie* to the brother and sister, in which Leon was so charming outwardly and apparently so content inwardly that Emma was reassured.

Five of these days were spent at Knoll Cottage in the northern part of the State, looking over their mother's possessions and planning for Leon's life there with Charlotte.

Leon seemed to take as a matter of course that the Riderdales were to be told all essential details; and what those essential details were, the two discussed several times. The best plan seemed to be to tell Mr. and Mrs. Riderdale and to bring Charlotte in only after the parents were willing for the marriage to still go on; and then perhaps leave to Mrs. Riderdale to tell Charlotte what in her judgment should be told her at once, Charlotte was still so young.

When all arrangements were completed, Mrs. Hubbard had nearly two days left before the steamer would leave; and these she spent at the Riderdales. She urged Leon to tell them then, that she might be there to help him; but he protested that the discussion might be prolonged and the decision hang fire many days, and he would not have her bothered. He would win if it took him a year.

Mrs. Hubbard, filled with her own happiness and the near joy of her going away, was yet sensitive to the atmosphere of those about her;

and she penetrated more deeply beneath the surface than any of them dreamed of, or she herself wished to do:—

Mr. Riderdale had no reserves with reference to Leon, Mrs. Riderdale had, and the lovers were not in love. Leon and Charlotte were attracted and approaching nearer with every heart beat; but when near enough, there might result a true coalescing or a violent repulsion; or the approach might be arrested midway and both remain ignorant of what they lacked until other persons crossing their path should teach one or both what the fullness of love is like.

On the last night, alone, after the household was quiet, Emma sat in the dark of her room until the first grayness of dawn began to steal over the roofs. It was her last opportunity to serve any of them; and the elements of tragedy were so palpably possible, the stability so unstable, that she could not endure the thought of going away without making an effort to serve them.

She opened a window, noiselessly as she thought, and leaned out; and each star seemed in paling and going out to warn her to keep hands off—greater powers than she had all her loved ones in their keeping. Something purely personal had been given to her: she should fasten her mind on that and go her way silent as to the rest.

"But honor, honor," she said to herself, "and all higher powers work through human

agents." Let the agents in this case be those directly involved: you have been taken out of it: stay out: it is no longer your business to put your hands in Leon's affairs: leave them to him. "Charlotte?" Leave her to those forces that everywhere working through circumstance bring about that which shall be.

"But I also am part of inevitable circumstance and I will not shirk," she said as the last star went out. She withdrew, closed the window, for the air was sharp, and turned to find Leon regarding her.

Sleepless, beside his own window, which had not been shut, he had heard hers open and seen that she was dressed; so to avoid waking others he had entered without knocking.

Neither had slept, both looked old in the morning light. Emma reached out her arms and Leon came and took her. After one look, she hid her face on his shoulder, and so the two remained while seconds ticked minutes away in their heart beats. Emma was drinking the dregs of her mother's race and it was more bitter than death. Leon dead would be comfort beside this. Leon spoke:

"I can not, dear sister, I can not."

She raised her face, tearful with despairing entreaty.

"Then let me: there is still time."

He griped her as he would crush her.

"Never: if it be done, I must do it."

"There is no other way. You will yourself see it so when it is done, be the outcome favor-

able or otherwise. You cannot start out in life with a lie."

"I am the product of a lie," he said brutally, and then ashamed, he added:

"See how your own happiness has followed you, found you out, taken you in, after all the lies and accidents of eight years. Leave it to God, Emma,—leave it to Him."

"We were one family and had responsibilities and rights over one another. Our father did but what he considered his duty, thrust upon him: I, his successor, being in the midst of that duty, took it up and fulfilled it for him. All that is past, inevitable, and no measure for present gauging. Since our mother's death, we have both questioned, if not quite repudiated, the wisdom of our father's choice. Do not let that blind you.

"Here, you, a stranger, invade another and a happy household over whom you have no rights and no duties save those of a stranger; and you would take the responsibility of possibly shattering this household by deceit like a common felon."

"You are harsh."

"I speak truth."

"The narrow truth of fixed limitations. What have I to do with conventional notions of honor? The work justifies the means."

"Then have more faith in the work; and expect the truth in you to carry conviction to generous minds."

"You have a most persuasive tongue."

"It loves you."

He looked down into her eyes that had brimmed again with those last words, and the years they had spent together focused themselves.

He had been holding her hands for sometime. Now he knelt and placing them on his head, said:

"Dear Emma, I will I s——"

One of her hands hastily covered his lips.

"Not that," and her face worked painfully while she looked away from him. In her mind —"Let your—nay, nay—more—cometh of evil." It shocked her and took away all her trust that he had been about to confirm his promise by an oath.

Leon looked up at her wondering, and resenting her mood, was about to rise, when she returned her gaze to his and said:

"Just promise: that is all."

"Very well: I will."

They did not see each other again alone; but it was the sting of that unspoken oath which gave to Emma's face the pathetic look of entreaty with which, some hours later, she looked back from the deck of the moving steamer where she stood with Jane Bowers beside her, going out to cross the unknown west to the unknown east.

Mrs. Riderdale, seeing that look, felt all her reluctance returned, augmented, pressing for expression, demanding explanation.

She turned toward Leon and seeing the distress on his face and Charlotte's sympathy, she tried to shake herself free. "It is only their love, passing the common loves of brother and sister; and the breaking of years of habit," she said to herself; and she chided herself not a little, on the way back, as she listened to Leon's tales of life with his sister and stories of her wise mothering of him,—these increased and abetted by Charlotte's eager questions and sympathetic admiration.

CHAPTER XV

A NEW BIRTH

The next morning at breakfast, the Riderdales received a good many letters.

Charlotte had a note from Leon saying that he had gone away for a few days on necessary business, would call as soon as he returned, and begged her to excuse him if he did not write while away. When off with Emma the previous week, he had written her once or twice each day and on one day had sent her three letters and one telegram,—not about any important matter, but just because she was she and he loved her. Now for him to intimate being gone several days without writing at all disturbed her, the more as he had given no previous hint of going or expecting to go.

Another letter was from a girl friend in New Orleans, Carrie Daskim. Carrie protested against Charlotte's marrying the first man who asked her; detailed at length various experiences of her own—she had come out the previous winter; and ended with an entreaty to Charlotte to postpone the immediate affair and carry out the programme as originally arranged.

Looking up from this letter Charlotte found her mother's eyes fixed on her over a handwriting she knew to be her Aunt Laura's.

"May I read Aunt Laura's letter?"

"What have you?"

Charlotte passed her letters to her mother with a terse résumé of their contents. Mrs. Riderdale's lips closed a little more tightly as, having glanced hurriedly over Carrie's letter, she read Leon's carefully.

"Did you know he intended to go?"

"No: did you?"

Mrs. Riderdale shook her head, folded her sister's letter, and said:

"I wish your father to see this first. I will give it to you later," and both women turned to see Mr. Riderdale's face flushed and puckered out of all its usual serenity.

"By the Lord Harry!" he was saying under his breath. In another instant he raised his eyes, but meeting those of his daughter as well as Mrs. Riderdale's, he hastily shifted a sheet of paper from his right hand to his left, and began to sip his coffee, spluttering unusually at the process, and his foot tapped audibly under the table.

Charlotte looked at her mother, who presently said:

"Henry, you seem disturbed."

Mr. Riderdale cast a furtive glance over his teaspoon at Charlotte, and then looking into his coffee, said:

"Only some of old Ramsburgh's impudence. By the way"—laying down Ramsburgh's sheet from a hand that still plainly trembled, and picking up several dainty looking letters passed them to Charlotte—"there, read your own obsequies. The Riderdales and all the branches thereof seem to think you are dead and buried. At least each is ready with an epitaph for your tombstone."

Charlotte laughed, took the letters; and, as Mr. Riderdale had finished his coffee, the three passed to the library, where Charlotte curled herself up in the cushioned corner of a divan and proceeded to read the letters from her father's relatives.

Mrs. Riderdale moved to the fire and stood warming her hands at its glow; and there, so soon as Charlotte was settled, Mr. Riderdale joined her. The corner where Charlotte was, being formed by the side of the deep wide chimney built extending into the room, was partly hidden from one standing just before the fire; so that Mr. Riderdale, keeping one eye on Charlotte's corner, could have some privacy with Mrs. Riderdale, who seemed as desirous of having such privacy as he.

They exchanged letters, he reading that from Mrs. Riderdale's sister Laura, and she the one from Lawyer Ramsburgh and another which Mr. Riderdale took from the inner pocket of his coat.

Having read these letters without comment, save to look at each other occasionally, Mr. Riderdale put all three back into his pocket; and entering the hall to which Mrs. Riderdale followed, began to put on his overcoat. Charlotte hearing the movement, looked up and called out:

"Why, father: I thought you weren't going out this morning."

"Must go, to make old Ramsburgh eat his words," he answered gruffly.

Charlotte came and stood at the opening, her fair figure framed by the silken curtains she held apart on each side, her face wistful with sweet apprehension.

"Dear Pop, what can Mr. Ramsburgh have done to upset you so?"

Her voice had the cadence they both loved, and as they looked at her now neither could speak. Mr. Riderdale turned his back on her, blew his nose vigorously, and passed out of the door held open by Aaron; while Mrs. Riderdale passed up the stairway, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Charlotte, not seeing the tears, felt herself ignored and returned into the library wondering what had so upset the family weather. She was ill at ease, poked the fire, straightened a picture, rearranged the papers on her father's table, opened her own desk and wrote a note, then settled herself in a large easy chair before the fire and began to read.

It was no use. Where had Leon gone and why could he not write? Then she thought over all their happiest hours together; but, somehow, she could not complete any of the scenes—approaching those details that had been most dear to her, she skipped them and hastened on to more ordinary, more obvious features.

She could bear it no longer. She yawned, stretched herself, then sprang to her feet and went in search of her mother.

She found her, not as usual directing the sewing women, but in the butler's pantry putting up some supplies to be carried to one of the hospitals; and on seeing Charlotte, said:

"You come just in time. I was about to send Leary to call you. I wish you to take these to St. Luke's Hospital; and from there go to old Mrs. Murphy's and leave her those magazines I promised to send. They are ready, in a bundle on the escritoire in the rear hall. Then come round by way of Mr. Chaparelle's and inquire about your coat. The carriage will be here in twenty minutes. The morning is cold: dress warmly. Good-bye, my daughter;" and having finished packing the baskets for the hospital, she kissed Charlotte and went toward the linen room.

Charlotte stood a moment looking at Aaron, who was looking at her; then turned sharply and walked away. Even the servants knew something was up.

Charlotte went the rounds conscious that the errands had been made for her; and returned to find guests at luncheon and engagements for the afternoon that kept her so that she was barely not late to dinner.

She was relieved to find her parents alone; and to see by the way they greeted her that the atmosphere was less menacing.

After dinner, the whole matter was discussed in the red glow and gloom of the unlit library. None of them would wish to see one another clearly as the comforting uncertainties of vision would relieve the strain of effort to keep up appearances. Each in his favorite easy chair could lapse from or allow muscular tension or facial expression as suited the passing emotions.

First came the various protests from eastern friends with their objections because of Charlotte's youth and inexperience. She was perhaps old enough in years—she was eighteen—but because of the seclusive training Charlotte had received, she was singularly guileless and unknowing.

All the grown-ups had especially pressed this judgment in their letters,—that a girl of Charlotte's type and training could not possibly know whether she loved the man or not—more than likely not. She was like a lovely, faintly fragrant bud, showing color only at its tip; and this whirlwind lover was simply trying to tear it open in that state—they hoped he had not succeeded in perpetrating any such violence.

Any way the result must be disastrous; for either the experience would ruin Charlotte's nature or give her a life-long sorrow,—the bud violently forced open—or the bud remaining shut, open afterward to some other presence.

"Charlotte is too nice a girl, is out and out on too generous a pattern to deserve the fate of falling in love after marriage. It could not be with the husband who had deprived her of gentle, normal expansion; a nature like hers could not escape love; and a tragedy was inevitable," wrote Mr. Riderdale's aunt, Mrs. Stepney.

For the first time in Charlotte's life, Mrs. Riderdale had that afternoon in conference with Mr. Riderdale regretted the seclusion in which she had reared her daughter; and both parents had agreed that they must give Charlotte the essential facts in human social experience, but of course from the higher plane on which large natures meet and regard them.

They could not foresee, nor did they realize until long afterward, that the effect—the only real effect—of their well-meant enlightenment was to drive Charlotte to Leon.

His chivalrous devotion, delicate love, and the seclusion in which he proposed they should live appeared to Charlotte as a welcome refuge from hateful and insulting intentions. As she shrank farther and farther into the depths of her easy chair—she was glad it was far back, away from the firelight—Charlotte experienced her first repulsion toward her parents.

They mistook her lack of exclamation and question as lack of understanding; and, determined to enlighten her somewhat, they said more than they had intended, talking pretty freely to her silence and the enveloping shadows.

Charlotte understood only too well, how or why she could not have told; but she knew it all, felt it all as only a pure nature of large capacity could. Through her unclouded imagination society appeared without one glamor, one familiar veil to hide its glaring ugliness.

Charlotte's mind took it all in, while the bud, which her heart was, closed tighter than ever—nipped by this untimely frost; and instinctively she turned to Leon. Through her parents had this ill wind blown. Leon was young and innocent like herself; and never since Leon's abrupt proposal had she so loved him, so longed for him as now, while she waited for the last detail to be dribbled out from the letters and from the social knowledge of her parents.

They did not offer her to read all the letters; it had been better if they had. Part being kept back, added to all that she now understood of the policy of her parents toward her until the present hour, did but increase the proportions of evil that loomed before her.

Things read in books, remarks dropped by stray companions, and isolated hints unsensed until now, suddenly took form and fitted themselves into one another and all she was hearing

until human society seemed, to Charlotte's sensitive consciousness, little else than a saturation of selfishness and vulgarity.

Existence itself was sin, and there was nothing desirable but to take some one as sensitive and clean as herself and flee to some beautiful solitude, there to live and die as the flowers do, unconscious of sex.

Leon, Leon her heart called. She would go with him and his work, and together they two would live and die far from the world, just they two, until old and gray, death called them: always together and always happy as they had been in the Santa Cruz woods with her father looking on.

Now it almost seemed sacrilege that her father had been there, that he and her mother knew all about it, and had seen Leon's letters to her when he and Emma had been away.

The thought of Emma brought relief. Emma would understand.

And she would. What Charlotte needed now was a woman whose nature was as large as her own and whose experiences of life had come through the inevitable contact of labor, care, and responsibility; who had known because she must, not as had been Mrs. Riderdale's girlhood, because she was idle and social knowledge a commonplace social pastime.

The talk had long ago ceased, and Charlotte was conscious that her parents waited for some

expression on her part, and she forced herself to give it.

Rising to her full height, drawing down her waist in front, and squaring her shoulders, Charlotte said:

"I wish to marry Leon, the sooner the better. I care nothing for all that our relatives have been pleased to write. You can tell them so if you choose; and I—I thank you for all the trouble you have taken to enlighten me. Good-night." She turned and left the room, her back very straight, very dignified, carrying the wounds her maidenhood had received.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Riderdale understood. They were excellent people as the world goes, but the consciousness of neither had ever known an unsmirched hour. They had wished to save their daughter from what was gross to them; they had saved her from much more; they had produced a creature beside whom their fineness was coarse. Their fineness was the exclusion of grosser particles; Charlotte's that of a homogeneous substance, like pure water, where no particles had ever yet been differentiated from the rest.

Mr. Riderdale rung for lights; and when they were alone again, said:

"We didn't get to the other matter. I thought this might swing her off."

"It seems to have swung her on."

"I wonder if she knows anything about it. Leon may have told her."

"I doubt it. She has not mentioned any such matter, nor given any impression of carrying secrets."

"It might make no more impression than this discussion has. How much do you suppose she understood? Her behavior might suggest that she knew everything."

"Or nothing. Of course, she did not understand. I did not expect her to entirely; but—goodness!—I thought I had kept her innocent, but I did not know I had made her a fool."

After some further discussion, they agreed to wait Leon's return to broach these or any other special matters again to Charlotte.

Mr. and Mrs. Riderdale were good, sincere, ordinarily intelligent people—above the average; but they had no experiences to help them out now. They were ignorant of the psychological fact that there is no understanding so vivid as that which comes by the sudden focusing, in an uncorrupted, unclouded, homogeneous nature, of innumerable floating lines of force. It is an understanding greater than any exterior, experienced fact can give; for it is racial and universal.

Charlotte, as she now lay with eyes shut tight in the darkness of her room, was more vividly knowing, more largely comprehending than either of her parents had ever been. She was being born, not into the world of petty fact and trivial experience, but above and within, into the realm of the inevitable, all en-

compassing laws of being. Until now she had been alone, untouched, wrapped in the womb of her unknowing; and now, being exposed, every touch hurt; and she would continue to shrink as all the new born do at the exposure and the invasion of her selfhood. Charlotte's whole being cried out for Leon as does a new-born babe for its mother; not for Leon as a person, but for the shelter and sustenance that he seemed to offer.

Mrs. Riderdale had sheltered better than she would ever know. Charlotte was full grown, ready for this birth; and although the process seemed violent, she had suffered no harm. Few are so fortunate—the times and conditions of incubation are so inadequate that births bring forth products often maimed, sometimes monstrous.

Charlotte had had the quiet and fullness of a perfect opportunity for her nature to grow until ready; and being born, she must now advance to adulthood according to the conditions the new world offered her.

But just at present, Charlotte, the tension of her revulsion toward her parents having passed, was crying alone in the dark, like the new-born babe that she was; and wishing she could creep back into the shelter of that dear womb whence she had been pushed.

CHAPTER XVI

JANE BOWERS

Jane Bowers had begged to be allowed to go with Mrs. Hubbard in any capacity; and finally she had been taken in no capacity; just taken, as one human being takes another as a burden because there seems no other thing to do.

It had been done against the advice of everybody who dared offer advice, either to Jane herself or to Mrs. Hubbard, including the physician who had attended Mrs. Gustaberg's last days, and several friends, who, hearing of her death, had hastened to Coronado to condole with Miss Bowers.

Some six years earlier, Mrs. Gustaberg came into possession of a piece of property of doubtful value; and knowing Jane's sensitiveness about wages ceded the property to her in such wise that Jane was to receive the income from it during Mrs. Gustaberg's life, and full possession if she survived Mrs. Gustaberg.

It was likewise stipulated that said income was to be in lieu of wages so long as it was sufficient; and that Jane was to let Mrs. Gustaberg know if she wished for more.

Mrs. Gustaberg never again heard of wages; and as Lawyer Ramsburgh managed the affair and received instructions not to mention the matter further unless the property became worthless, Mrs. Gustaberg never knew that, owing to shrewd management on Lawyer Ramsburgh's part and the prosperity of a certain company, the property increased in value; and that a large part of the income from it was every year invested for Jane Bowers.

Jane had few wants, and she managed her private affairs, after the above mentioned event, more parsimoniously than ever, always in view of never again meeting the conditions that had forced her into service.

While she never accepted a tip nor a gift of any sort that could be construed as such, she shared liberally in the Christmas civilities lavishly offered to Mrs. Gustaberg and accepted occasional gifts from her mistress.

Once when Mrs. Gustaberg bought Jane a new black silk—her best gown for all occasions—Jane scornfully told her mistress that she could afford to buy all the clothes she needed; at which Mrs. Gustaberg had professed much hurt, said she gave it out of friendship, and for no other reason. This so mollified Jane that she accepted the gift and confessed her old one was shabby; and, thereafter, allowed her mistress to give as she chose; and, as Mrs. Gustaberg was forgetful of her kindnesses, she kept Jane pretty well supplied.

Thus it was that at Mrs. Gustaberg's death Miss Bowers came into full possession of a snug little property and had besides various investments which altogether gave her an income that seemed riches to her; and being income, it made her independent of forced labor.

These matters Lawyer Ramsburgh had not thought it incumbent on him to report to the Gustabergs—brother and sister; but he went to Coronado the day after the reading of the will and had a somewhat lengthy conversation with Jane.

He did not tell her the provisions of the will; for, standing beside Mrs. Gustaberg's grave on the hills back of San Diego, he had felt an irresistible repugnance to having the poor lady's body taken up, dissected of heart and lungs, and exposed to the necessarily public comment of such a cremation as was possible; so he concluded to let that matter wait, inasmuch as those provisions of the will could as well be carried out later; and anyway the pious pilgrimage allotted to Miss Bowers could not well be undertaken in late autumn or winter.

Mrs. Hubbard had thought of Jane Bowers as a possible housekeeper for Leon and Charlotte; but Jane refused even to consider the matter; so that Emma had felt obliged to take her "for better and for worse," as she said to herself; and it was turning out much better than she had had any hint of its doing.

Mrs. Hubbard's first surprise was a certain buoyancy about Jane on the day following a conference with Lawyer Ramsburgh after their return to San Francisco, before taking the steamer; and the second, on that same day, when Jane insisted on paying her own passage.

Other surprises followed; so that Jane, from being the burden that a rather elderly woman hitherto afflicted with rheumatism and a supposed fixed habit of thought and action in all matters was expected to be, actually became an interesting and valued companion.

It has been hinted that Miss Bowers received a fair start in life. Added to this had been much opportunity for observation, in the persons of travelers from everywhere whom Mrs. Gustaberg had met in their pilgrimages through California, and in those of the substantial residents of the state who have been gathered from all over the world.

Miss Bowers had the adaptability of the better-born native American; but her occupation and her sense of fitness had hitherto prevented her from showing much that was in her. Moreover, she had expressed a great deal of herself through Mrs. Gustaberg, as a mother does through a petted child.

Now, freed from service, a first-class cabin passenger paying her own way, Miss Bowers felt herself lifted into the ranks where she had always desired to be; and she began at once to prove her right to be there. If the proof was

sometimes excessive it was but the product of a determination to be a lady as completely as she had hitherto been a servant.

Miss Bowers held that nothing can take from a well-born woman either the right or the capacity to be a lady. Moreover, she had somewhat severe notions as to what constitutes a lady; and much as she idolized her late mistress, she had dared in the secret recesses of her mind to confess that Mrs. Gustaberg never quite came up to the mark.

Jane had learnt to make the most of minor ills in order to protect herself from the unnecessary and incessant drudgeries called for in fulfilling Mrs. Gustaberg's often thoughtless whimsies. People who are always waited on, however kindly their natures, are apt to forget what it is they ask of other people's hands, feet, backs, and eyes.

Now, Miss Bowers told herself, she must stop all that slumping. She must hold her back straight and walk like a lady, though her joints did twinge.

Jane had dressed in the plainest, simplest, oldest manner she could, partly as a foil to Mrs. Gustaberg, who liked to look young and luxurious, and partly on account of convenience and economy. Mrs. Hubbard had given Jane the greater part of her late mistress's wardrobe; but knowing that lady's aversion to another person's wearing her clothes, Jane had

left the whole neatly packed and stored with other possessions in Lawyer Ramsburgh's care; and provided herself with some genteel half mourning, and started with the least possible amount of baggage, determined to buy what she needed wherever she might be.

Mrs. Hubbard had been pleased with Jane's appearance at starting; but each day developed some new feature, until she understood that Jane was undergoing a real, a rapid, and an interesting transformation of exterior state, manner, and expression.

Miss Bowers was a good sailor; yet this was her first experience of travel by water. She had frequently suggested a trip along the Pacific coast and even to the Sandwich Islands to her late mistress; but Mrs. Gustaberg loved the sea at safe distance.

Now, by the third day out, Miss Bowers was the only passenger who could go on deck or dine with the Captain. This, added to other recent happenings, put her on very good terms with herself; she was surpassing her own expectations, and this stimulated her to further self revelations, until she allowed a certain starved part of her full swing.

She had the naivetè, curiosity, teachableness, and power to enjoy of a child; and she let these loose on the steamer and all other opportunities surrounding her; and by her pluck, courtesy,

shrewdness, and adaptability so won the esteem of officers and crew, that, to a man, they were delighted to serve and to teach her. By the time Mrs. Hubbard could again appear on deck, Miss Bowers not only knew more about steamers, navigation, and the phenomena of ocean travel than Mrs. Hubbard did, but she had become a person of consequence.

But there was one thorn in Miss Bowers' otherwise delightful journey: she had carried from San Francisco a memory that pricked the more, the farther she went, until it became a secret too ugly to endure.

Mrs. Hubbard early sensed that there was something on Jane's mind; but believing her to have a somewhat morbid conscience and considerable unnecessary remorse about her late mistress, thought she was doing Jane a favor not to encourage Jane's evident desire to rid herself of something which she was yet unable to screw herself to the point of communicating, and finally Mrs. Hubbard refused to talk or to listen to talk about the past.

So it came about that the secret was not told until the three were nearing Yokohama; and then, not to Emma but to Mr. Hubbard, who from first meeting with Miss Bowers had called her Jane, teased her unmercifully about every personal idiosyncrasy, and made her the butt of innumerable jokes.

It followed that the two speedily became excellent friends. Mr. Hubbard understood Miss

Bowers' nature and what she desired to achieve and why she desired it better than Mrs. Hubbard did; and as his manner toward Miss Bowers was always complimentary, Jane acknowledged to her herself that, though she smarted to distraction under his teasing, no other treatment could so soon and so fully have emancipated her from her past.

And when the secret became the only consciously galling bond to that past, Jane told it in a burst of grief and shame.

Mr. Hubbard, after some questions and a little grave silence, offered to take the matter off her hands. He already knew a good deal more about some phases of the matter than Jane herself did, or Emma either, and this new development still further increased his interest in certain affairs, presumably going forward across the sea.

It seemed better to him that no one else should be told Jane's secret, for still there might be time to set the matter right before any unpleasant discoveries were made. So he prepared certain advices and enclosed them with a letter from Miss Bowers to Lawyer Ramsburgh; and on the steamer's landing at Yokohama this was dispatched by the first mail to San Francisco.

Some weeks later, Lawyer Ramsburgh, having already assumed certain responsibilities relative to the execution of his late client's will,

assumed one more and pigeon-holed the entire communication. Likewise, he conveniently forgot to acknowledge any part of it.

CHAPTER XVII

IN HIDING

A week had passed since Leon Gustaberg had left San Francisco, and still he was in hiding. November had come and this especial morning was bleak and raw.

Buttoned to the chin, Leon stood watching the wind drive and behead the waves that were running fast along the coast near Crescent City.

Each morning Leon had called himself an a-double-s with increasing conviction, only to settle down later in the day to an attempt to argue out with himself a justification for silence, and the breaking of his promise to Emma.

He had wandered a good deal during the week as though movement could clear his brain or resolve his doubts; and he had brought up the previous night at Crescent City.

The decision could not be put off longer, he told himself on leaving his hotel; and now standing in the raw wind, he felt exhausted in body as well as in brain. Even his muscles were sore as though he had literally and physically—as mentally it seemed he had—been fighting a whole week for his life, and Charlotte's too:—he could not think of her as will-

ingly acquiescing in any plan that her parents might make to separate her from him.

A small schooner hove in sight. It was running down the coast. It seemed to Leon a mere toy in those tumbling waters; and for some moments he was painfully tense with expectation that she would be driven on the coast. But she passed, apparently not swerving out of her way. Then it came to Leon that what that schooner had, he needed,—a captain to keep him to his course, regardless of wind and weather.

"I have an object in life; my will should hold me steady to it. Even Charlotte should not be allowed to make me swerve. I must be a man and no longer a fearful boy."

Saying this, he turned on his heel and strode away; and two days later presented himself at the Riderdale residence just as the family had finished dinner.

Charlotte was the first to come forward with greeting; but Leon stepped back and with a courteous gesture said:

"Not yet: wait until you have heard me."

Turning toward Mrs. Riderdale, he made a courtly bow: and then extended his hand to Mr. Riderdale, who took it feeling a trifle confused. Leon was apparently master of the situation, and his manner that of a conqueror rather than of a culprit.

Being seated in the library where softly shaded lamps added to the fire glow, Leon look-

ed from one to another of the silent group, and felt that Charlotte, though immediately puzzled and hurt, was his whatever he did; while of the other two, Mrs. Riderdale would be easy to convince and Mr. Riderdale the obstinate one. This surprised him; for he had anticipated Mrs. Riderdale as the great difficulty.

This change of judgment so confused him that he blundered away from his intention, and said irrelevantly:

"Knoll Cottage will not be a pleasant winter residence."

No one replied; and Charlotte, who felt an increasing tumult within her, rose and left the room.

Leon heard her faint, soft footfalls on the polished stairs; and not until they died away, did he recover himself and his errand.

He flushed scarlet; but he turned and looked at Mrs. Riderdale until his discomposure ceased; and then in his most ordinary manner said:

"Mrs. Riderdale, did you ever have a personal experience of any matters, commonly known as supernatural?"

It was now Mrs. Riderdale's turn to be confused; and, being taken unawares, she replied:

"Yes; once."

"I shall esteem it a favor if you will do me the honor to tell me about it."

Mrs. Riderdale proceeded to tell what she had not told to anyone for many years, and which neither Mr. Riderdale nor Charlotte had ever heard.

She had had an only brothter who had been the pride of her mother and whose death in his early twenties had wrecked the health and almost the reason of her mother.

It was some three years after the death of this brother that her mother and herself were on a visit to some friends who lived in Syracuse, N. Y.

During this visit, they were one day walking in the street unaccompanied by friends, when an elderly gentleman, a friend of her father's youth whom her mother had not seen for many years and was a stranger to her, crossed the street and joined them; but instead of taking the curb side next her mother, he came behind them and walked at her side. This action being peculiar for a man apparently so courtly was observed by both ladies and served to a little embarrass both.

After some exchange of compliments, this gentleman, addressing her mother, said:

"Madam, have you sons?"

"I had one"——

"Who died at twenty-three?"

"Yes," looking at him with surprise.

"He belonged to the New York State Militia?"

"Yes."

"He had on his uniform when he died?"

"Yes."

"Allow me to try to describe your son and his uniform"; and he proceeded with item after

item, which were accepted by her mother, until with increasing agitation her mother said:

"These details, sir, are correct to the smallest minutiæ; but how can you know them, since you never saw my son, nor have met any member of my family since his death?"

"Madam, your son walks by your side: that is why I crossed to speak to you, and why I did not take the curb. I have but described what I see, and have done it at your son's request, that you may have reason to believe in his continued existence and in his love for you, and have occasion to grieve less."

Further questions elicited further convincing proofs of the truth of what the gentleman said; and also this about the gentleman's own peculiar faculties:—

He belonged to no sects, attended no séances, was like other men save in this,—that sometimes he experienced, as he had that day, phenomena that are hid from ordinary senses.

He seemed to have two sets of senses, one of which was elusive and beyond his control. He rarely knew beforehand when they would act and he had never been able to summon them to action by his own desire or will.

This had been true since his youth; but as these senses never presented themselves for use save in humane service to some other person, he held that they were not really his, but something lent for use by some higher power to fulfill that power's desire. He had never regarded

them as lawful things for exhibition or investigation; and save to the recipients of their use, he had not disclosed them.

He likewise told the ladies that having delivered the message, his other senses had been withdrawn; but that so long as he had their use, the son whom he saw was as real and as substantial to the senses by which he saw him as mother and daughter were to his ordinary, physical senses.

Mrs. Riderdale did not tell the whole of this account without some question and comment; but neither she nor Mr. Riderdale noticed that Leon had been silent throughout.

Mr. Riverdale had led on the narrative; and finally, when Mrs. Riderdale said that neither she nor her mother had ever doubted the reality of this occurrence nor the substantial truth of the gentleman's account of himself, Mr. Riderdale rose, went to the fire and tip-toed up and down in front of it, his hands under his coat-tails nervously flapping them, evidently much excited.

"I remember an interesting case. When poor Charlie Whiting died, I met George Mercer at his bedside. After all was over, we emerged from the house together and I asked:

" 'Doctor, what think you comes after?'

" 'I don't think. I know.'

"Of course I begged him to tell why he made so astounding a statement, and seating ourselves on the garden bench—by the old oak

you remember, Louise—Doc. Mercer told how, when a lad of seventeen on his father's farm, he had fallen from a load of hay, struck on his head, and been taken up for dead; that later, during efforts to resuscitate his body, he had seen himself as a being floating in the air, had seen all that occurred in the room where his body lay, had looked through solid house walls as through glass, had seen into his mother's mind and knew that she was saying over and over to herself, 'My poor George, how can I live without you, how can I live without you'; and that he had not cared whether the efforts to resuscitate him were successful or not as he liked his present state and freedom,—when suddenly, he was back into his body and struggling for breath. As soon as he could speak, he had proved the truth of all this by questions to the persons present, who had corroborated every detail.

"And Doc. ended his tale by saying, 'I have never since speculated about what comes after death; for I know this much,—a soul with all the consciousness we have now and much added in the way of senses and powers that we know nothing about gets out of the body and is well and alive. That is enough for me. I can trust the rest.' Now that is as interesting a tale as yours, Louise."

When silence fell, Leon spoke:

"Could you imagine a man making the study and investigation of such phenomena a life's work?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Riderdale impulsively, temporarily absorbed in the interest of these narratives, and in memories of the persons mentioned in them.

"And regard it as worthy?"

"None could be more so."

Charlotte had entered unperceived, and been listening, no one knew how long, in the shadows at the far end of the room, but where she could see a part of Leon's face. She now came forward and asked:

"Is that the work you are so eager to be engaged on?"

"Yes," replied Leon, rising to meet her attitude and gaze, but not moving an inch forward.

Charlotte hesitated an instant and then coming nearer, offered him both her hands, saying:

"I am glad."

Mr. and Mrs. Riderdale turned to leave the room, suddenly conscious that Leon's case had been won, even before it had been presented; but Leon, still holding Charlotte's hands almost at arms' length, said deferentially:

"Mr. and Mrs. Riderdale, I wish to be very sure of your approval before I speak further with your daughter.

"Not alone, nor principally, is the investigation of such phenomena when occurring to others, my chosen pursuit. That will be but a small and incidental part of it.

"I believe that the senses mentioned by the gentleman in Mrs. Riderdale's narrative are

possessed by all persons potentially, and by many actually; and that humanity is but just entering upon a phase of its development that is more remarkable than anything achieved in historic times.

"I believe that this phase has not to do principally with any material matters, but with a change in man himself,—nothing less than the bringing to consciousness in humanity a new series of sense phenomena which shall open new and vastly more important realms to discovery and conquest than anything in man's past has been.

"I myself possess those senses in actuality, though as yet, like the gentleman's of the story, they are not under control.

"I wish to develop and master them in myself; and in doing that to learn, if I can, how others may achieve similar development in themselves. Also, I hope by use of those senses to make important additions to some department of human learning. There seems to be no limit to the application and use of those senses when once possessed in full control."

While speaking, Leon had unconsciously drawn Charlotte, taken both her hands in one, and placed his other arm around her.

Now, as he finished, the two stood together, the embodiment of beautiful youth, glorified with enthusiasm and uplifted by great resolves.

Mrs. Riderdale, who during Leon's speech had done more thinking than hearing, her head

drooped, not once looking at him, was again making for the door, when Mr. Riderdale said:

"Come, mother; let's congratulate our children. The thing is noble, has never yet been done, so far as I know; and we ought to be ready to help it along all we can."

So once more, Mrs. Riderdale was shamed by circumstances into a consent that she did not approve.

CHAPTER XVIII

CRIMINAL OR MARTYR

Leon Gustaberg had walked to his hotel the previous evening at midnight; and when about half way there, a thought had struck him. He stopped stock still a moment, and then struck his cane on the sidewalk saying, "I'll do it," and strode on.

The next morning he sent Mr. Riderdale a note of request for a private interview at his hotel; and there he had a long conference with him about business matters.

Leon then waited for the evening, when he dressed with even more fastidious care than was customary; and went to the Riderdales after dinner. He had been invited to dine there; but had sent a note begging to be excused and saying he would call later.

The four were now in the library, and Leon, standing on one side of the fire, full six feet of handsomeness, stirring a tiny cup of black coffee, turned to Mrs. Riderdale and said:

"Madam, are you a mind reader?"

"No: but I wish you were."

"Perhaps I am. May I try?"

"To read whose mind?"

"Yours."

"I should be much relieved if you could: that is—if—if to do so would mend or change anything."

Mrs. Riderdale had not slept since the previous evening, and her usual smooth tones had certain ugly nicks in them, as though her mind had recently been put to unusual and severe usage.

"My dear Madam, I am not sure that it would; but I should like to try. Before that, however, may I tell you a story?"

As silence seemed to give assent, Leon settled himself and began, his coffee still untasted.

"When I was a child of between eight and nine years of age, there came to the village where we lived, a poor wanderer. We took him in and nursed him a few weeks until he died.

"Some days after his burial, my father took me to his grave and told me the story of the man's life. It was briefly this:—

"He had left home, wife, children, property, profession,—everything, to wander in obedience to voices that he had heard, and had ended at our house a poor, homeless vagabond. He had done no active evil; had always meant to do well; and had always expected, even to the hour of his death, to come upon some great knowledge or power by which he should do some remarkable thing for humanity.

"People commonly regarded him as a harmless lunatic; but my father said that he was a hardened criminal. The essence of criminality, my father said, is the following of one's own will regardless of the wills of others. This man had done that all his life. In following the voices—or what he thought such—he had followed his own will; and every person dependent upon him, every person related to him, almost every person ever associated with him in any capacity had first or last suffered at his hands.

"My father then and there charged me never to strike out for original ways, but to always keep to the common, well-beaten highway of common men, or I too would become a hardened criminal. He said that that man was responsible for what he had done; but that I should be still more and doubly responsible, for I had been warned.

"The lonely grave—he was not allowed burial in consecrated ground—the dreary, tragic story, and my father's stern judgment and warning made a memory that was the terror of my boyhood. I often felt that I should, in spite of my quite contrary desires, become such another. The fear engendered by that act of my father and the consciousness it gave of the usual judgments of men have shadowed my life and in some matters made me a coward when otherwise I had not been a coward.

"But this incident had a relieving touch to which—rightly or wrongly, I leave you to judge—I have always been inclined to give due weight as a balance.

"This man died in February; and my mother, who had tended him day and night from the hour of his arrival, was not strong for some weeks afterward and did not go out.

"Her first walk was to his grave. I accompanied her, carrying a basket filled with a profusion and variety of wild flowers that at her request I had spent the morning in gathering.

"She bade me cover the grave with them. I threw down the basket and flew to her arms, saying: 'Father said Samuel Peters was a horrid, wicked, bad man, a—a hardened criminal.'

"My mother had been softly weeping. She loosed my arms, dried her eyes, found a seat for us both, and bade me tell her exactly what my father had said.

"When I had done this, she told me the story of the man's life,—the same story in fact, but from an opposite point of view, doubtless the man's own.

"When she had finished, I covered the grave with flowers; and standing there above the lovely, fragrant mound of spring blossoms, my mother embraced me tenderly and said: 'My son, remember this grave as that of a pioneer to a new world, a martyr to a new civilization. There be many such, and there will be thou-

sands more; but the world they seek is real, and the civilization to be established there greater than any that man hath yet seen.' "

For a time no one spoke: then Mrs. Riderdale said gently:

"Tell me about your mother."

Leon told all that he knew; and when he had finished no one could speak just then. After a little, Leon said:

"Mrs. Riderdale, may I tell you now why I did not wish to dine here to-night?"

"Why?"

"Because of what I feared was in your mind. May I try to tell you that now?"

"No, no: it were indecent."

"Madam, I should not presume to know or try to know what is in your mind that you do not offer to tell me; but I know what has been in many another mind about these matters.

"My father was a just man, but there be many who are not; and the just and the unjust have, from the beginning of the world, judged and scoffed at what they themselves have not experienced.

"And there be the weak and the credulous; and on these the unscrupulous will prey; and the unscrupulous gather most where the chances of detection are least.

"Shall then the unscrupulous be allowed, like a horde of savages on the borders of a new continent, to frighten away legitimate adventure and settlement?"

CHAPTER XIX

MRS. RIDERDALE'S PRIDE.

Nearly a week passed in social functions which included other people, so that the four had no further opportunities for private discussions.

Mrs. Riderdale was not contented. Leon saw plainly enough, not only that his original judgment was correct,—that she was the one most difficult to convince—but that she was no nearer being convinced than on the night of his last return.

He was tempted to run away again; for the temporary glow of his sudden and unexpected success then had about disappeared in the withering chill of Mrs. Riderdale's dislike. Even her liking and admiration for his personal qualities had itself been turned against him as constituting a means, if not a positive proof, of what she feared.

It sometimes seemed to Leon that he was about to lose Charlotte by some inexorable fate working through Mrs. Riderdale as he had lost his mother through his father and Emma.

He was more right in this than he knew; for Mrs. Riderdale had not only managed in these

social occurrences to separate Charlotte and Leon; but she had taken pains to lead conversation in Charlotte's presence, both at home and elsewhere, to the worst tales about Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, Healers, Clairvoyants, Theosophists, and what she called generally "degenerate eccentrics," until Charlotte was as nauseated with the whole subject as she had been at the previous attempts to enlighten her about social matters.

The effects were somewhat different in the two cases:—In the previous effort, Charlotte had thought of Leon as a refuge for herself. She now thought of herself as a refuge for Leon; and she longed to have him all to herself that she might protect him from ever hearing any of these detestable tales.

Leon, then, did not go far wrong when, instead of yielding to despair and running away, he brought the issue to a focus by sending the following letter to Mrs. Riderdale:

"MRS. HENRY RIDERDALE.

"*My Dear Madam*: I can no longer so far flatter myself as to be insensible of your continued displeasure to my suit for your daughter's hand.

"I am also aware that you may regard your consent to the proposed marriage as won under false conditions.

"I beg you, Madam, to lay this charge to the impetuosity of youth and to the fear instilled by my father's conduct, which fear your own present feeling so amply justifies.

"Had you known my family history and my intentions at the beginning you would never have given me the shadow of a chance, even to be a friend and guest in your household; and yet—I beg pardon for reminding—the most sacred memory of your own girlhood is of an incident in the annals of that realm where I choose my life's work.

"Is your experience to count for nothing because there are experiences of other sorts? You do not share in the ugly experiences of life on this ordinary plane, because your own attractions and character are not vicious. Why, then, imagine that I must necessarily have nothing but, or even a majority of, ugly experiences in my chosen pursuit?

"I feel that I shall be but half a being without Charlotte, and consequently unable to achieve what a whole being might. Yet we two units can make one whole only through her consenting to this pursuit as willingly and completely as I myself do.

"With less than this, marriage would be the tying together of two units with unlimited capacity to strain and hurt each other. In such case, it would not matter what pursuit was followed,—mine or some other of Charlotte's choosing: it could not receive even a half of our whole power of interest.

"For such result I cannot care; therefore, I beg you to allow me to submit the following propositions:

"To release Charlotte wholly and irrevocably, if she wishes it. If this be uncertain,—

"To release her tentatively; and for you and Mr. Riderdale to take her east and to London as originally arranged. I am not sure but that I wish this for Charlotte's sake, however much it might later, in my loneliness, seem unfair to me. Charlotte would be free any time during her absence to choose whether the engagement should be renewed or broken off altogether.

"Besides these, there is the marriage at Christmas as previously arranged.

"I need not add that if Charlotte makes choice of the third, with the consent of yourself and Mr. Riderdale, I shall feel that the best half of my life work is accomplished.

"I beg to remain,

"Yours to command,

LEON GUSTABERG."

This letter was delivered by special messenger one evening after dinner, when Charlotte had been momentarily expecting to hear Leon announced.

Mrs. Riderdale read the letter and passed it without comment to Mr. Riderdale, who read it, likewise without comment; and, with a glance at his wife, passed it to Charlotte.

She merely glanced over the pages, sprang up impulsively, and said:

"I am going to send for him: it is a cruel shame."

"Have you read the letter, Charlotte?"

It was Mrs. Riderdale who spoke in cold, even tones.

"No."

"Do so."

Charlotte hesitated. She was accustomed, had always been accustomed to implicit obedience. She looked from one to the other of her parents, and seeing the same command on both faces, she reseated herself and carefully perused the letter, her face and neck, meanwhile, becoming scarlet.

When she had finished she dropped the letter in her lap, still holding it by her left hand; and knowing that she was watched, she steadfastly looked at the letter while she did a little thinking.

Presently, she raised a non-committal face, turned first to her mother and then to her father and asked:

"May I decide the alternatives?"

Neither replied.

"May I?" looking intently at her father.

"Yes; I think it her right, Louise."

Charlotte turned to her mother and waited.

"Yes"—reluctantly—"but you need not do it now."

"Now: once and for all," Charlotte insisted, looking first at her father and then at her mother, until both had said yes.

Charlotte stepped quickly to the fire, laid the letter on the logs, rung for Leary, seated herself at her desk and wrote:

"Mr. and Mrs. Riderdale have left the decision to Charlotte with their consent that it be given now, once and for all. Come and get it."

A half hour later, Charlotte received Leon in the drawing room, and Mr. and Mrs. Riderdale were left alone in the library.

There was no doubt from Charlotte's manner what her decision had been; and both parents felt that now they had really lost their daughter.

Mr. Riderdale smarted under what he felt was Charlotte's judgment of him. He had not been inclined to be harsh; but he had been trying to support Mrs. Riderdale, who seemed to feel the matter so acutely. It was hard on him; for, next to Mrs. Riderdale, there was no living thing or interest in his life at all comparable to Charlotte. He had not yet especially centered his affections on Temple.

Therefore, he now turned to his wife with some querulous intent; but Mrs. Riderdale was weeping as he had not seen her do since Harry's death.

"Mom: it's all pride, just pride."

"Pride!" she exclaimed fiercely, dabbing at her cheeks.

"Yes: pride. We have made her and wished to show everybody our work and take glory to ourselves, not for what she is, but for what we have done.

"Then as to Leon: that's all pride too. We fear that somebody, somewhere will find out,

and think we have married our girl to the riff-raff of the world.

"Now, we have just got to stop all this or we shall be in a constant tension until Leon has done something that the learned world accepts; and until then, we shall really and consciously—even if we don't do it openly—nag him all the time.

"In a sense we—you and I—have got to marry the thing too, accept Leon's estimates, and detach ourselves from the common estimates."

He got up and began to move about.

"Leon don't have to have an occupation. He's got some money and we've got more. A well-to-do young man now-a-days in this country can be idle without disgrace.

"Let's take him that way,—as a man of leisure and whatever he does as his fad. The incidents of his life have tended to make him too sensitive about the matter, and to take his purpose in it and himself too seriously.

"There's where we can help,—by taking a good deal for granted, and making the two as happy as possible.

"If he make Charlotte happy, I shall not think any the worse of him if he never does anything else."

He came, sat down beside her, took her hand and said:

"Dear heart, don't let's make it hard any longer."

Mrs. Riderdale finally smiled into his entreating face and said:

"Your theories are all right; and there doesn't seem anything left for us to do but to try to make them true in practice. But what you said about pride isn't true. You haven't a single atom and never had: while I—"

"Never mind Mom: what's yours is mine."

"I wonder if this will turn out as other cases have?"

"How, I don't understand?"

"Why, my horrid pride has come near to wrecking matters several times in the course of our married life; and your lack of it has saved the situation. I—I'm sure I hope this may prove a saved situation. I am not bad enough to wish it otherwise, even to having my pride vindicated."

"Dear Mom: why will you abuse yourself? Are you not Charlotte's mother?"

CHAPTER XX

WHAT LOVE IS

The next evening, Leon and Charlotte were loitering in the drawing room, waiting for dinner to be announced, when Leon said:

"I must have grown. I certainly feel taller than I did a week ago," looking at her playfully.

"Let me measure you."

Leon straightened himself against a door-casing, while Charlotte stepped up on a low chair and marked his height. Then she insisted on measuring the distance and made it six feet, three and a quarter inches.

Leon laughed.

"You flatter me. I have never measured but six feet, one; and," looking at the heels of his shoes, "these would not add much."

"Let me try again," said Charlotte.

Leon fixed himself, and then glanced up at Charlotte; and when she had finished the marking, he turned to face her saying:

"Don't get down."

Charlotte was gowned in some soft, thin, lustrous stuff of the color of the tuft of silk on young corn; and with this she wore the small vivid, orange red poppies that grow in the Cali-

fornia wheat fields in summer,—these poppies having been copied so exquisitely in silk that Leon had at first thought them real.

Leon stepped back to take in the whole picture, from the narrow frills of lace at the bottom to the poppies in her dark hair: then he turned and groped across the room like one suddenly smitten blind, lifted a heavy curtain, and as it fell behind him, he saw the stars looking at him from a clear winter sky. He caught his breath sharply. He knew: at last, he knew what love is,—a great desire to touch and to be touched.

Hitherto his feeling for Charlotte had been an indefinable demand, as of some force outside himself, thrusting itself through him, seeking to draw her. Now his whole being was flooded. Every cell in his body called out to her; and yet to touch even the tips of one of her fingers,—nay, the hem of her robe—would be torture, exquisite torture: that he knew, but how he knew it he did not know.

Charlotte hesitated whether to follow Leon or to run away; so she stood still in the chair waiting, the measuring forgot. The moments passed; the room was breathlessly silent. Wondering, she tripped down, crossed the floor, and lifted the curtain.

Leon turned from the stars and looked down at her, but he did not move. His face looked strange to her with the shadow of the heavy

curtain still covering it, and she vaguely sensed something that she did not understand.

She was about to turn away, when Leon with some mighty effort drew himself together, and lifted her hand to his lips as it were the sacrament on the altar. In his heart he said: "She does not know; until she does, she shall be as sacred as high heaven."

When they entered the dining room, some minutes later, Mr. and Mrs. Riderdale were struck with the expression on Leon's face. They had never seen such before. They did not understand it; but it seemed as Mrs. Riderdale said later, that "Leon's face was touched with divine illumination."

The dinner was unusually silent; because all four felt as if wrapped in some sublime, undifferentiated consciousness where common speech is impiety.

Leary said below stairs:

"It's mighty won'erful how Mistah Leon do look t'night—"

"As he saw all de holy angels and heered all de harps a playin," interrupted Aaron.

"I allus did say he were not like common folk," said Aunt Eliza, the cook.

"Pears t'me you nor no one else ain't ever see him look as he does t'night," said Leary thoughtfully.

"What s'pose 'tis?" asked Aaron. "He was in de drawin' room with Miss Charl't fore dinner; and he didn' have that look when he com."

"How's Miss Charl't look at dinner?" asked Sally, the chambermaid.

"Same as allus when he's here only very quiet like."

"I tell ye what: he's got relig'n," said Aunt Eliza.

"Yo go long," said Aaron contemptuously, "how'd he git relig'n in de drawin' room with Miss Charl't; an' he warn't dare more'n twenty minits."

"I's' lik'ly som'thin Miss Charl't be'n sayin to 'm," said Sally.

"Nuthin Miss Charl't say, nor no other womun nuther c'uld mak any man look like he do," said Leary solemnly.

"It's God Almighty," said Aaron.

CHAPTER XXI

THE COMMON HIGHWAY

Leon Gustaberg no longer desired solitude or an isolated life. He recognized that these desires had come from his fears; and that to follow them was an indulgence which would inevitably bring other fears and necessitate further indulgences.

He shrank from much that had been in his own mind, and from what he now realized had been Emma's idea of him and of his work.

He realized, too, what would have been his mother's influence, and the probable effect of her diaries, had they come to him before this revelation of himself had come. He now saw his mother simply as his mother and regretted that he could not have entered into her last days with nothing else in his mind.

He confessed that that phase of his mother's loss which he had found so unendurable was not a calamity; indeed, at the time it occurred, it had been to him a boon.

What was still more strange to his consciousness, he apprehended that Emma might not have been a helpful element had she remained near enough to exert an influence; for the no-

tions which she had of his pursuit were borrowed from current ideas.

Thinking of these things, it flashed upon Leon that he had been freed from various insidious forces that probably would have wrecked his life, and given a clear, clean field in which to begin. Not that these incidents had been made for him—not at all—but that he had been brought to them at the crucial time in his own development.

Leon could even feel grateful to Mrs. Riderdale for all the humiliations that she had made him suffer; for in realizing her attitude, it had all come home to him as a personal matter what it was that made the pursuit which he had chosen so odious a thing.

Leon had seen that odious side before; but never so personally as now.

He now saw that the cult was like a barbaric religion,—a mass of childish and vicious superstitions. He had never heard of anyone starting in this pursuit without practicing certain asceticisms; and all the directions that he had ever seen inculcated these as essential, initial steps.

The methods prescribed were various; but the one central object aimed at in them all was the subduing of the body, as an indispensable prelude to entering into the newer phases of consciousness.

This Leon perceived was due to the fact that this development had been everywhere regard-

ed as a phase of religion, accompanied by the notions that whatever is not physical is spiritual, and that the physical and spiritual are necessarily and forever at war.

He now almost laughed at this bondage, so simple an every-day sort of a thing did the cult seem,—like the changing of social customs and the expansion of new political ideas.

If, as Leon believed, the new senses were in the line of normal human growth, what was needed was, not the lessening, but the enhancement of the physical life.

One could go out from or up to the next phase of development only by reaching an abounding fullness on this present plane. "Who ever heard of a starved state being the parent of an improved species in the great process of evolution?" Leon said to himself.

Leon had a splendid body, clean, strong, sound, full of vitality; and he resolved to keep it so, as the most precious instrument for his chosen pursuit; and the means he would take were the best that were already known.

He was not thinking of trying to find out everything by the new senses, but only some few things. How to preserve physical health was not one of these few; hence, for that, he would rely on the sources of information which are within the reach of all.

Then as to social relations: he needed those to keep his character healthy and sane; and, here likewise, he would take what he found and rely on accepted judgments and standards.

He, as every man, owed something to his country; he must be, not only a social, but a political unit,—a citizen.

There was no peculiar thing for him to do, no peculiar life for him to live. He must take all the usual responsibilities as other men do; and his vocation could be pursued in one place and under one condition as well as another. Some time each day, free from interruption, was all that he needed, and he could arrange for that anywhere.

Leon felt that in this thinking, he had laid off a great burden,—the burden of separateness.

He felt, too, that having laid off the burden of separateness, he was called upon by every manly feeling to justify his present attitude, and prove what he believed—that the whole race was tending toward this development—by in himself achieving the thing, while in all else, he was an ordinary man, citizen, householder, social unit, friend, husband, father.

Leon now sensed the value of his father's stern injunction,—"To keep to the common, well-beaten highway of common men"; and he resolved to do so in the same sense that all men conducting original researches everywhere do.

To this, Leon desired to add the hospitality of his mother's attitude toward those unfortunate adventurers, who, seeking the same goal that he was bound for, are overloaded by car-

goes of ascetic necessities, and misguided by false lights and what to their superstitious fears are voices, but which may be only the siren waves breaking on unknown shores.

Toward all such, his heart went out in compassion. Every miserable tale that he had heard—and Emma throughout the years that he had been with her had not spared him any more than Mrs. Riderdale had recently spared Charlotte—seemed to come to him now demanding re-explanation; and he realized that mental deformity is as likely to use its limitations for gain or for exemption from common laws, in one field of effort as another.

Into the all-embracing understanding that he now had, Leon was willing to gather them all, even the fools and the frauds. He would like to sift the straight from the crooked, the true from the false; and set each one striving anew with that small power of real labor which each was capable of.

In his understanding, Leon had entered into brotherhood with the despised, not for what had made them despised, but for the grain of truth there was in their pursuits; and he hoped that no one of these misguided ones would ever again fail of unemotional interpretation in his mind.

CHAPTER XXII

FEARS ALLAYED

It was Thanksgiving Day, and through the early dusk outside, the rain was falling softly, drip, drip. Leon and Charlotte stood watching it. Mr. Riderdale was asleep near the fire, heavy with their early and abundant dinner; and Mrs. Riderdale herself was just passing off, her graying hair against the high back of a thickly-cushioned chair, when she caught the low talk near the window:—

"You would not care for it: there's nothing there for either of us."

"But you thought"——

"Yes, but I do not now: may I not change my mind?"

"A woman's privilege."

"Let me be that much woman."

"What, then, shall we do?"

"What I have been urging these four days, —what you wish to do. If you could choose out of all the possible things to do, what would it be?"

"A trip to Mexico."

"Mexico!" exclaimed Mrs. Riderdale, forgetting herself and sitting bolt upright.

"Mexico," drowsily echoed Mr. Riderdale, winking his sleepy lids and stretching his frame to waken it.

"Why not? We've never been there," said Charlotte, coming forward, followed by Leon, who said:

"Let's all go."

Mr. Riderdale got up, met Charlotte, grasped her by both arms, and backed to seat her in his own chair, while he looked into her happy face. She was a child yet, an innocent child at heart; and all his manhood surged with fatherly tenderness to protect her, until she should be a child no more.

"So Knoll Cottage is off?"

"Yes."

"And we are all going to Mexico?"

"Yes: why not?"

"Why not to be sure?" He gurgled like a happy boy, with the joyful prospect of not being separated from Charlotte—"even for a day—a day," he said in his staunch heart.

Mrs. Riderdale looked from one to another of the three, and asked:

"How has it all come about, this change of plans?"

Leon was embarrassed. It was not so easy to tell Mrs. Riderdale what he had felt before nor what he thought now. To hold a mirror in which another may see the details of one's own processes of growth is difficult at best; and when it comes to doing it to one's worst enemy

—though under present flag of truce—is well nigh impossible, especially when the enmity is distinctly allied with parts of those processes.

Nevertheless, Leon was about to try, when Charlotte glided to his side, covered his mouth with her hand, and said:

"Mother, Leon has asked the privilege of a woman,—to change his mind: we do not wish our causes inquired into too curiously."

They all laughed; but the touch of Charlotte's hand had cleared Leon's embarrassment; and he told briefly what he had been through. He did it in such a manly, simple way, without exaggeration or excuse that even Mrs. Riderdale was convinced, and said:

"You must excuse me for saying it; but I never was more relieved in my life."

Then moved to make some amends for the implication implied, at which Leon and Charlotte had both flushed, Mrs. Riderdale rose and started as though to cross the room, but stopped behind Leon's chair and bending down kissed him on the cheek,—the first time that she had been other than formal with him.

Leon sprang to his feet, turned, looked at Mrs. Riderdale, then bending low, lifted her hand to his lips, murmuring:

"I have lost one mother. Have I found another?"

CHAPTER XXIII

WOMAN THE RESTORER

During the next few days, Leon made a memorandum of the most important experiences that he had had in the line of his chosen pursuit, and an outline of that phase of it which he hoped would follow to some definite and valuable result; and one evening he presented these to the three.

Mr. and Mrs. Riderdale were so interested and asked so many questions that the discussion was prolonged until midnight, when Charlotte, who throughout had been a silent listener, asked:

"And where do I come in?"

Leon looked at her a moment and then said:

"You are that deep, fathomless pool of clear water that reflects the heavens."

"That sounds well, but what does it mean?" asked Charlotte with a slight frown, as though she felt herself being treated as a child who is put off with the husks of some fine speech when hungry for the bread of life.

"Listen, dear," replied Leon gravely. "I believe that the source or Father of all is substance, in which or of which is born motion,

the Christ, the savior from stagnation and death.

"All motion tends to perpetuate itself and by its cumulative impetus to fix substance in definite forms until by the very hardness of that fixety the form resists further motion and so snaps and substance is scattered.

"At this point, consciousness comes in to comfort substance by enfolding it, choosing what part of the broken thing shall be saved; and, gently separating and dissolving the other parts, restores them to original states; then, having rested and rearranged the whole, sends each part forth with a new motion. This new motion is the new Christ which again saves, but again in its age becomes fixed and dead.

"The Christ is born under the auspices of consciousness, the sifter and restorer, by whom substance becomes virgin again; and in this virgin substance, is the Christ that saves ever born, by the new impulse given by consciousness, which is the Holy Ghost."

No one spoke for some moments. Then Leon said, as if half to himself:

"I suppose that is why the sin against the Holy Ghost is the one unforgivable sin:—it prevents substance from becoming virgin and so the new Christ cannot be born. To sin against consciousness, as it rises spontaneously within one's self, is to court annihilation."

Three were looking into some vacancy far within and away. Charlotte alone was in the

present. She silently stepped to Leon's side, laid a hand on his shoulder, and said:

"And the pool, dear?"

"Is consciousness."

CHAPTER XXIV

A TENDENCY TO MARTYRDOM

Charlotte Riderdale wakened the next morning with a sense of unworthiness. Hitherto she had not thought much about herself. She had not lived in a strenuous atmosphere; and most of the great questions of worth and of duty had escaped her or only touched her lightly.

Until the coming of Leon, Charlotte had been a happy child, filling easily the role her parents ordained for her, and thinking little beyond the necessity of meeting their simple requirements.

At the avowal in Kearney Street, the calm waters of her life had been stirred and repeated disturbances had followed; but not until last evening had any of these occurrences pushed her beyond a transient discomfort.

Charlotte had suffered and had enjoyed; but neither profoundly nor personally. Her selfhood, as such, had hardly been touched. From all previous stimuli, she had reacted back to her girlhood, to the placidity of her previous life.

There had been no opportunity to talk further with Leon the previous evening, owing to

the lateness of the hour; and Charlotte had been so healthily tired with the long strain on her attention that, on retiring, she had fallen asleep, with only a vague sense of new and great things to be understood.

Now on waking, it was as though while she slept something in her had been awake, had thought it all out; and, in doing so, had weighed her in the balance and found her wanting.

At least, she shrank from the marriage, not on account of Leon, but on account of herself. To her imagination this morning, Leon was some radiant immortal, one of the gods who in the splendor of beautiful youth had come down to earth and sought her love; and she was only a mortal maiden.

Leon had come with divine powers to do a thing never yet done; and he had revealed to her last evening that he expected her to be greater than himself.

She could not be: there was nothing in her that rose up to this great height.

She repeated to herself what Leon had said. She remembered it word for word, and heard his voice as though he were saying it again, and saw the look of glorified love on his face.

She felt herself to be in a temple of lofty and vast dimensions, and called upon to serve at its altar; and she was ignorant of even the simplest words of its ritual.

"The sifter and restorer," that which chooses what shall be out of what is, restores the resi-

due to primal states, and sends the chosen on new services. She could not: she was utterly ignorant.

Charlotte sprang from her bed and dressed, the while there moved through her thoughts in stately procession all the tales she had read of the immortals who had wedded mortals,—tales hitherto without meaning to her, now charged so full of it that she trembled and blundered at the simple, homely, so familiar task of bathing and robing herself.

She was late to breakfast, but only Temple remarked on the fact; and Charlotte, looking across the table at the smiling but very human face of her little brother, realized with a pang that her own childhood was gone. She never should again, she said to herself, be just thoughtlessly happy.

She looked at her mother, and noticed for the first time, the whitening hair, the fine wrinkles, the supersensitive mouth. Every day she had seen these, had known them; but now they were first informed with meaning.

Charlotte's thoughts recoiled back upon herself with an inward shrinking as if the hand of death were about to grasp her own young heart.

Her mother had suffered. She realized it now dimly, but felt that she should soon know it all; and she drew back from a knowing that seemed to threaten her very existence.

She looked at her father. He was more gray, more wrinkled than her mother; but there

was in his face a something that smote her, like a slap on the back, as of jollified hope and *camaraderie.*

Charlotte recoiled from that, too, as though it were gross and irreverent. But she looked again and was comforted. Her father knew; but his knowing was different: it was of the sort that did not destroy. Instinctively the arms of her need reached out to grasp her father. She would like to know as he knew, not as her mother knew, nor as Leon knew.

Then Charlotte became ashamed. Leon's knowing must be greater than that of any one whom she had ever known, probably ever would know; and not to desire to know in his sense and to follow where he could lead was only fresh proof of her unworthiness.

Nevertheless, when they arose from breakfast, Charlotte followed her father into the library, where they two were alone, as Mrs. Riderdale went to attend to various household matters, and Temple had been taken away by his nurse.

Mr. Riderdale had business correspondence waiting his attention; but while at breakfast, he had divined that Charlotte was not at ease in her mind; so now he waited to know what her request might be.

Charlotte, instead of walking about while she talked, as often when embarrassed, or standing still and asking a favor as sure of its being granted, now came close to her father, her

face full of questioning scrutiny, locked her hands behind his neck, and hid her face on his breast.

Mr. Riderdale was standing in front of the fire, with his open palms behind his back; and not knowing the meaning of this unusual demonstration from Charlotte, he did not change his attitude.

"Father, I think I am not fit to marry Leon."

Mr. Riderdale's hands came to her arms with a snap; and he was about to make the jocose remark that she was fit to marry any man on earth, when having lifted her from him, he caught sight of her face, and saw that the trouble, whatever it was, deserved, from Charlotte's point of view, serious treatment; so he gently seated her before the fire, drew up another cozy for himself, and said:

"Now, daughter, tell your old dad all about it."

And she tried to, her nature revealing both to her father and to herself unexpected depths of strenuousness.

"Of such stuff were the martyrs made," Mr. Riderdale said to himself as he watched her flushed and sensitive face, and the movements of her hands, grown suddenly tense and nervous.

Mr. Riderdale was puzzled. He did not believe in martyrdom himself; and he did not wish Charlotte to believe in it. He believed

in a middle ground between flippancy and strenuousness, as the only sane and wholesome outlook on life.

Mrs. Riderdale had, in youth, taken nothing seriously enough; and, latterly, had been inclined to take all things too seriously. All through their married life, she had vibrated from one extreme to the other, with a growing tendency to settle at the further extreme of carefulness. This tendency he had latterly combated, while formerly he had felt obliged to encourage it as a balance to the other tendency. He had never seemed able to get Mrs. Riderdale to seat herself at the middle point of the balance, and to see things exactly as they are; but he had apparently succeeded in making her realize this tangential tendency of hers and to coöperate with him in rearing their children on the safe middle ground.

Until the coming of Leon, Charlotte had not given Mr. Riderdale a moment's unrest in this matter. She had been as full of the unthinking, reposeful power of unconscious growing as her father could desire; but he perceived that now she was thoroughly upset, an agitated sea of moral questions; and that the measures which had been adequate with Mrs. Riderdale would not be so with Charlotte.

Charlotte's nature had always shown a serious tendency. The unbroken joyousness of her serenity and the cheerful acquiescence of her will to whatever life brought to her, wheth-

er of pleasure or of discipline, Mr. Riderdale had often speculated upon.

He had thought it due to splendid health and to the absence of any real hardship in her life; but on certain occasions, he had seen that there was a background of character in Charlotte which circumstances only could reveal; and which he could not, from any glimpses yet seen, predicate as either noble or ignoble.

From babyhood, when free to choose, Charlotte had chosen the lofty and the serious; and Mr. Riderdale had speculated whether it was that her nature demanded great food or whether this resulted from an innate tendency to pose. He never had liked it.

When a mere slip of a girl of eight Charlotte had learned by heart in two readings Bryant's "Thanatopsis"; and had recited it with an appreciation that to her father was repulsive in its grown-up-ness. On another occasion, about a year later, she had chosen to learn a scientific article about the wonders of the chemical power of the sunlight, instead of some simple poem as requested.

All the way up, Charlotte had shown the same tendency, poring over philosophical and scientific works and reading again and again parts of biography and history where great movements culminated.

At sixteen, Charlotte had become intimate with a girl who was intensely romantic and poetic; and Mr. Riderdale had encouraged the intimacy to note the effect on Charlotte.

This friend had very easily made Charlotte feel inferior and awakened a desire to follow where she led; so Charlotte to make herself companionable had read Keats and Shelley and Goethe and Jean Paul Richter, and had learned and quoted passages from them.

But when the reaction came, as it soon did, Mr. Riderdale found Charlotte poring over Plato, weeping at the death bed of Bæda, detesting Goethe, and quoting Milton.

Now, on this December morning, Mr. Riderdale saw that this side of Charlotte was in full possession of her and demanded to be obeyed.

He had hoped to see her married and move on placidly to wifehood and motherhood without any such violent emphasis on one part of her nature. He had wished her to continue to take life in a joyous matter-of-fact way, without depression or elation, and without much asking of the why of what came to her, either externally or internally.

But he now felt the necessity of feeling his way with her. Leon was keyed to a high pitch; and if Charlotte reached a still higher, there was no knowing what of foolishness and of sorrow the two might not together be guilty of.

The pity of it! Not all the asking nor all the striving had ever wrested one real why from the great unknown where ultimate causes are born. Leon seemed to have some deeper insight than he had met before; but it might prove only one more glamor and illusion.

He disliked to see Charlotte entering upon any such quest, and with Leon! Mr. Riderdale groaned in spirit. He had been through it all in his youth; had spent days in study and nights in argument; had, at one time, been ready to immolate himself as a missionary; had dreamed great dreams of reforming himself and others; and had at last accepted certain propositions as undeniable facts:—

Error was inseparable from human endeavor in every field.

The absolute was unattainable: no sooner does man reach an apparent absolute than it begins to crumble away beneath his feet.

What is, is the product of an infinite series; and the infinite series is more right than any one unit can possibly be: so that the one man idea of reforming a world or even a small part of it is an insane arrogance.

One man is less to the world than one ant to the largest of ant hills. The ant's possible labors are measurable in worth only when associated and coördinated with those of all the other ants in the hill. So man: and yet many a puny youth and maiden dreams of measuring himself against the universe; and these dreamers usually waken only after they have so battered themselves to pieces trying to row across or against the great current of human movement that they have no vital force left with which to enjoy existence.

For himself, Mr. Riderdale liked to feel that he was floating somewhere near the middle of

the stream, not needing even to use oars save when some voyager threatened to crash into his boat, and then exerting himself merely to the point of self-preservation and the integrity of his boat. He turned aside occasionally and gave of his substance to assist some fellow traveler who, attempting too much, had come to grief.

To lie back in his boat and sun himself and just be: that is what Mr. Riderdale liked, and what he wished Charlotte to like.

He had gotten up twice and moved to the far end of the room, and been silent a good while, absorbed in his own thinking; and Charlotte was waiting.

"What should you like, my daughter, if you could have your heart's desire?"

"Not to be married at Christmas."

Mr. Riderdale was shocked, and his face grew troubled. The martyrdom was already begun.

"When, then?"

"Oh, I do not know: perhaps"—with a little catch of her breath—"never."

"But Leon?"

"He must find someone else more worthy."

He waited a bit and then with a deep sigh said gently:

"Had you not better tell Leon all about it? I'm afraid your old father has no potent remedy in his pharmacopœia for your present trouble."

Charlotte looked at him piteously, lacing and unlacing her fingers.

"I will, oh I will."

Mr. Riderdale turned to his table and took up his correspondence. The two young people must work it out. Experience in detail can never be handed down from person to person, across the generations. Nothing is gained or kept but that small moiety which becomes part of the fibre of the race, and is inborn with the generation.

CHAPTER XXV

A VIOLET CROWN

Leon Gustaberg thought that he had gained but a small part of what he had set out to gain; for without Charlotte's love, all his other gains were inconsiderable.

As for that better understanding of himself and of his pursuit that had been prepared by the various events of the past three months and brought to focus by Mrs. Riderdale's opposition,—that was bound to come anyway, and the late chain of circumstances was only one of the many agents that could have brought it.

He realized that these changes had come more quickly and possibly with less of suffering and humiliation to himself and may be to others than perhaps any other way that could have been devised.

He had come to himself, about himself in an important particular; but he thought this of less consequence than what these same circumstances had failed to bring.

Another gain there was which he estimated at something nearer its real value; and that was his present realization of love itself.

Though centered in Charlotte, his perception of love was independent of her and quite removed from being affected by anything that she might do.

Though he should suffer, if she ultimately did not love him—he suffered now from anticipation of complete failure in that direction,—he did not question either her right or her possibility—nay even the probability—of her loving someone as he now loved her.

He even contemplated the fact that he might, in case Charlotte turned from him, love some other woman; but this, in itself, but served to emphasize his inadequacy as regarded her; for he did not think of himself, in losing her, as loving her equal, but as forced to take a long step downward.

Since the demand for Charlotte first arose in Leon's consciousness that September morning in Market street, he had thought of her as a part of himself; and all his efforts to win her had seemed but the necessary steps to the coming into possession of what was really his own.

Now, if he lost her, it would be a losing of the best part of himself,—a proof that he himself was a failure, a being too worthless to be owned by its own better part.

Ever since that day when she had measured him in the drawing room, he had watched her for signs; and on this particular morning, he had reached the point of admitting to himself that he had seen none.

He said to himself that Charlotte was as much asleep as far as consciousness of love is concerned as she was on that morning when he had made his first avowal in Kearney Street. Charlotte had never had—so Leon thought—even what he had experienced that morning.

It had all come to him so suddenly,—the demand producing a persistent, increasing determination; and, then, when all obstacles had been removed, that other—the fullness of loving—had come as suddenly as the demand.

Charlotte had had as much time and perhaps as much stress as he, and with no special result. Any other gallant gentleman, coming as he had come, would have fared as well and perhaps better.

Leon thought of all this now, until each moment that, in counting itself backward, pushed him toward the wedding day seemed to register against him fully sixty seconds of dishonor.

To marry Charlotte before she loved him, he had some days ago regarded as unthinkable dishonor. What Emma had laid so much stress on was trivial compared to this.

If Charlotte loved him, his occupation or pursuits, or how or where they lived did not so much matter; but to marry without her love was for him, with eyes wide open, to commit a most foul wrong against her.

Leon did not doubt either Charlotte's capacity to love as he loved, or the now almost prob-

able certainty that it would be some one whom she had not yet met.

The talk the previous evening had lifted Charlotte in his eyes to the level of the role that he made for her; and on the way to his hotel, she had seemed so fitted to fill that role, that her failure to love him only served to increase her worth and the greatness that another man would win in case he ultimately proved unworthy to wed her himself.

The days were hastening to Christmas and he must speak at once.

Leon was not utterly without hope, as he made this decision. He would still keep on trying to win Charlotte, and he could wait indefinitely, but she must not be bound.

Leon spent the larger part of the day in trying to find a gift worthy to carry to Charlotte.

From the first, he had not cared to make such gifts or to invite to such entertainments as ordinary social intercourse between beaux and belles sanctions. Confections he had never thought of taking; and if he took flowers, they must be rare and exquisite.

Today, nothing that Leon found in San Francisco suited until a jeweler, whose stock he had already looked over four times, bethought himself of a necklace that had been one of his failures and yet too costly to offer to his usual customers.

The order for this necklace had been filled at Tiffany's in New York City; but the parents

for whom it had been ordered lost the daughter whose birthday it was to grace, before the necklace arrived; and the circumstances had been so unusually painful, that the jeweler had merely put the thing away until called for, which it never had been.

This necklace was a string of violets of exquisite enamel, each with a small diamond dew drop on some part of the flower, each flower accompanied by leaves, and the whole so linked that it looked like the violet chain some fairy might have woven to string about her neck.

The price—the jeweler offered it below cost—was beyond Leon; but feeling that it might be his last gift to Charlotte, he thought it did not matter how much he was pinched afterward.

He added a slender gold hooped comb, and had the jeweler fasten the violet chain to the edge of that.

With this and a large box of violets, Leon presented himself at the Riderdale residence late in the afternoon.

He found Charlotte in a Greek gown of white wool, which, on the shoulders and at intervals down the upper arm to form the sleeve, was fastened together with small gold clasps set with amethysts, and which was confined just below the bust with a slender girdle of braided gold wire clasped in front with two large amethysts. On her feet were white leather sandals, strapped on with white ribbon. She looked like some fair goddess.

Charlotte had begun to wear Greek gowns for private home use when she first read the Greek dramas; and her wardrobe ever since had always contained several of them. This particular one was a favorite of the whole household; but in it, Charlotte said she always felt like a Greek maiden who had lost her lover.

Its simple cold lines of austere grace did give to Charlotte's figure a sculpturesque beauty that set her apart from the warmer, colored life about her.

Leon thought this gown quite the most charming thing he had seen Charlotte wear, always excepting the corn silk and poppies.

The comb that Leon had brought reached from the Greek knot, round over Charlotte's head, just as a beautiful violet crown should, he said as he slipped it there. Then he put a large cluster of violets in her girdle and pinned them at intervals down a fold to the hem of the gown, and then slipped a bunch under the satin strap of each sandal.

He then led her to a long mirror; and Charlotte, looking at herself, was pleased, and the old happy child look came back to her face; and when soon after he led her to the music room, she played and sang for him the happy songs that he loved.

This respite of joy Leon had given himself; but the moments were passing and he must speak. So he seated Charlotte in a cozy corner from which a window looked upon the garden,

where bare tree branches were traced against a cold, intensely blue December sky.

Following with his eyes, these delicate traceries, Leon told Charlotte how he had wondered if she had not sometimes regretted the nearness of the wedding, and did not even now wish that she might put it off and take what was left of the winter and spring as originally planned; that he realized he had been selfish in urging so early a marriage; and if she would excuse him for that selfishness, he would be happy to wait her pleasure. He would follow the family and everywhere be her devoted attendant; or, if she preferred to be as free to enjoy the society of other men as she would have been had he not come, he would stay in California and attend to the execution of parts of his mother's will that had as yet received no attention. In this latter case, he would come to her whenever she should call him. He wished only and always her wishes; but it could not be but that she had wished the marriage put farther off.

During this long speech, Leon did not once look at Charlotte, lest he lose his purpose, and shirk his duty.

All the tension of the morning had come back to Charlotte, augmented by this plainest possible hint that she was unworthy; but she felt grateful to Leon for speaking; it saved her the effort. Also, he had offered her time in which to grow worthy.

Not having watched, Charlotte forgot her attitude, and now sat, not leaning among the cushions as Leon had placed her, but with legs crossed and hands clasping her knees, was bent forward eager to make it easy for Leon, the while her fingers locked and unlocked themselves. As soon as Leon ceased, she spoke up quickly:

"Certainly we will put the marriage off, put it off forever if you wish it."

"If I wish it!"

Leon looked at Charlotte now, looked long, the while her eyes fell and the fair skin of her arms and shoulders became deep dyed.

"If I wish it; if I wish it."

Then he rose and taking her arms drew her unresisting to him and held her close. He had not done this since she measured him; for since that night, to his sensitive honor, any intimacy was but taking an unfair advantage and adding to the long record she would have against him if ever she came to love another.

Now, as he held her, he felt her heart beat and flutter like that of a frightened bird, who longs to flee but has no strength to resist the hand that holds it. Desiring to reassure her, and partly unconscious of what he did, Leon bent his head until his hair touched hers, and a quiver passed through her, from head to feet.

"If you only could love me, all would be well," he said as he loosed her.

Charlotte retreated back a step, repeating his words in her mind, and looking up at him added to herself, "Love you!" It seemed to her at that moment that she could worship him; and suddenly she desired to sink to the floor and kiss his feet. Perhaps she would had not her down-going gaze fallen on his shiny boots, when she experienced a recoiling shock and sank back on the divan.

Why are human beings so dressed that simple emotions are made ridiculous? But the recoil had relieved her tension.

Leon divining something of her first feeling, sank on his knees and laid his head in her lap. Charlotte caught her breath. She dared not touch it,—the beautiful, so dear head. Instead she said:

"I am not worthy to love you, Leon."

"Not worthy!" Leon raised his head and looked at her. Then he did to her what she had wished to do to him—he bent and reverently kissed each foot on its silken instep; and by that act Charlotte felt herself lifted, made worthy, ready to go wheresoever Leon would lead, while he said:

"Dear, if you love me, there is no further question of putting the wedding off. It cannot come too soon."

Charlotte did not reply; she only looked at him. He took a seat beside her and there they sat a long time silent, looking sometimes out of the window, sometimes at each other, until the

light faded and they were in darkness with the winter constellations scintillating in at them.

After dinner, Charlotte asked Leon about his mother's will: and he told her that when his mother's body was buried, he had not known even that she had left a will; and since he had known had regarded residence at Knoll Cottage as a convenient point from which to have the body raised and her wishes fulfilled; but since residence there had been given up, he had felt obliged to choose between doing what he could at once and leaving the whole matter over until spring.

Now he thought he really ought to try to do what he could at once. He would make inquiries on the morrow and set about it.

Charlotte asked for particulars; and Leon told her that he proposed to have the body exhumed, the lungs and heart removed, put in preservative liquors, and stored where they could be shipped to him at any time; and the remainder of the body burned and its ashes left with Mr. Ramsburgh until such time as Jane Bowers should return and fulfill his mother's wishes. Then, at some convenient point in the east, he would have the preserved parts shipped to him, and he would leave her long enough to bury them at the places designated.

CHAPTER XXVI

CHARLOTTE'S DREAM

Charlotte usually wakened early; but the next morning much earlier than usual, and her first thought was of what Leon was about to do to his mother's body. It disturbed her, almost to the point of distress, although she knew that Mrs. Gustaberg had herself requested all that Leon proposed to do.

She tried to shut the thoughts away; and as it was still quite dark—she did not know the time—to go to sleep again, which she did, and dreamed the following:

She walked by a church which was surrounded by graves. The church was open and she entered. It was bare of any furniture but an altar. Its floor was stone, and every stone a tablet; and its crypts were full of the bodies of the dead.

The souls of these dead floated in the air, and filled the church with a company which, invisible to the outer eye, were plainly visible to some inner sense that to Charlotte's dream consciousness was as real and as matter of course as the outer vision. But to outer feeling the place

was as oppressive as it was to inner sight; and she returned to the open air.

Here also were graves, each covered with a flat stone; and the stones were so close that they formed a paving which surrounded the church for some distance. Here too were souls. They floated in the chill wintry air; but were chained by threads of delicate, vital substance to the dead bodies below the paving.

These souls, both within the church and without, differed from one another. Some were deformed, some filthy, some obscene; and mingled with these were the most beautiful, the most delicate, the most purè. The clean and the good continually shrank and tried to escape contact with the foul and the evil; but no escape was possible.

Some of the souls were silent, some wept, some moaned, some uttered obscenities and others horrible blasphemies.

Oppressed by these sights and sounds, Charlotte turned to leave the place, because she was impotent to do aught to relieve any one of these suffering souls.

She had gone but a few steps, her eyes directed to the ground in painful revery when she became aware of some one approaching. She looked and saw an angel—so in her dream consciousness Charlotte called this being—who came to her and said: "I will tell you the meaning of what you have seen."

The angel led her to the dark, thick sod be-

yond the paving of graves; and there they seated themselves and the angel told her the substance of the following:

A soul must usually remain near its body until that body decays; because incased in the body's tissues are certain vital principles, memories of experiences, and bodies of knowledge that are necessary and valuable to the soul, and that can be drawn off only as the body decays.

But this struggling and suffering are unnecessary and come from the thoughtless cruelty of men to their dead.

Honorable men, pure women, dainty youths and maidens, and innocent children—those who in life kept themselves or were kept from all foul contact—are in death associated with the depraved, the harlot, the unclean, and the hardened in vice and crime.

No one still living on the physical plane can conceive the horror and the keenness of the suffering which these loathsome associations entail as the slow weeks, months, and years pass.

Men's methods of burial prolong the agony. From the moment that a soul leaves its body, decay should be hastened and not retarded. Whatever retards the decay of the body prolongs the detention and suffering of the soul.

Men should wrap their dead loosely in thin cloth, enclose them in soft porous wood, bury them in dry earth but a few feet in depth, and apart from all other graves; and at the end of

a year, take them up and burn them in the open air.

Men who live in cities and can afford to go to the country for these duties should do so: and some member of the family should dwell within a quarter of a mile of the grave until the year is ended; for the souls of the dead are often in need of refuge, and a known and loved relative or friend, and not a stranger, should be that of refuge.

When the angel left Charlotte, she started back along the road where the dream began, trying in her mind to plan a way to remove the blind ignorance of men regarding their dead—when she awoke.

This dream so impressed Charlotte that with the first stir in the household she rose and sent a note to Leon requesting him to come and hear a strange dream which she thought had been sent to her in consequence of their conversation yesterday and to prevent his doing what he intended about his mother's body.

Leon came and Charlotte told her dream. It did not impress him. He questioned her carefully. She was not accustomed to dreaming; and when she did, the dream was usually some mixed, incoherent or fantastic thing; while this had seemed as real and been as vivid as an actual experience. The memory of it, and the feeling it had left in her, was as of a painful fact lived through but yesterday.

Leon was puzzled. The inference of the dream was plain enough; but Charlotte put that inference into words while he hesitated.

"You go at once to San Diego, have your mother's body raised, transported to Knoll Cottage, where we will stay until your mother's wishes are all fulfilled according to the directions given in my dream and in her will."

Leon winced. He was face to face with the first real question of his chosen pursuit and he did not like it, though it did come from Charlotte.

"But your people. There is not room at Knoll Cottage for so large a household, even if your parents could endure the isolation"—he remembered that he had once thought nothing of Charlotte's enduring it—"and they will not like to be separated from you."

Leon saw the whole question of his eligibility as son-in-law would be raised again in Mrs. Riderdale's mind; and he shrank from that, quite apart from his taking no stock in the dream itself.

Charlotte brushed aside every scruple. Her mother and father would probably agree with her that all due respect should be paid to his mother's comfort under the present trying conditions; but if they did not accept the dream as an angel's instructions, still would it be right and binding on Leon and herself to obey it. Moreover, until quite recently, her parents had expected her to go to Knoll Cottage; and after

her being settled there, they were to go east without her.

But Leon found himself unable to share either her judgment or her enthusiasm of self-sacrifice; so he made excuses and left to think it over.

Leon spent two days wandering about, visiting cemeteries, graveyards, and church vaults, trying to take the attitude of the dream. It seemed reasonable enough, even likely; but he failed to accept it as binding on himself with reference to his mother.

So he told Charlotte that he could get no further than a desire to let the whole matter alone and let his mother's soul take the chances that all other souls take, where her body had been buried in good faith, according to the usual custom.

If this dream was operative and meant for his mother's welfare, it should have been given to him, the night after she died or at latest after he had heard the will read.

"But the dream has come now because you had recently determined to do something, and it tells you how to modify what she wrote in her will. And it came to me because I am to help you."

Leon shook his head and said:

"Don't let's think about it any more."

Charlotte was hurt. This was her first sharing in Leon's peculiar experiences, and the first opportunity to be of real help to him,

If she were to be the "sifter and restorer", what better could he do than to accept what she now offered. It seemed to her to be directly in the line of the role which he had so devoutly given her.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CLEARING OF THE WAY

The night after giving the foregoing decision to Charlotte, Leon himself had a dream.

In this dream, Leon sat beside a woman who had just died. At the foot of the bed stood a young girl sobbing convulsively.

Her grief touched Leon; and, falling on his knees, he prayed silently that the woman be restored to life.

He felt a hand on his shoulder; and, looking up, saw the soul of the woman standing beside him. This soul was invisible to the girl, who had, however, ceased to weep and was now watching Leon.

Leon arose from his knees, thinking that his prayer had been answered:—the soul had returned and would reënter its body.

But the soul showed Leon that she could not reënter the body; for the vital life force had wholly left the body and must be renewed ere she could enter it.

With complete self-forgetfulness, Leon drew the vital force from his own body and directed it into the dead body, which gradually became

alive. Then the soul of the woman entered the body and the girl had her mother again.

Then Leon realized that he was faint unto death for loss of his body's life force; and knew that he had restored the woman at the expense of his own life.

But he looked at the girl, saw her happiness, and was content: when lo, that vitality which had belonged to the woman's body flowed back to it from out a cloud of darkness which had hitherto hid it from Leon, entered the woman's body, and Leon's own vital force returned to his body.

In this dream, Leon felt natural, single-hearted, as though what occurred could not be otherwise; but on waking, the dream irritated him.

It was an unusual dream and must have meaning; but what other meaning to him now than that if he gave his life,—time, reputation, and happiness—to his mother for a year, all that he had, all that he gave, would be his own again.

Yet he could not. He thought about it until he endured again all the miseries of that week when he had run away from his promise to Emma.

Meanwhile, on this same morning, knowing nothing of Leon's dream, Charlotte told her dream and the provisions of Mrs. Gustaberg's will to her father and mother, and what she had advised Leon to do.

Mrs. Riderdale took this from Charlotte as she had the episode of her own girlhood,—thought the dream had been divinely sent and ought to be obeyed.

Charlotte was prepared for objections, and was much relieved to find her mother ignoring all but the plain, evident duty. This drew Charlotte back to her old reliance on her mother, which had not been quite so spontaneous since a certain evening when she had been offered some social knowledge.

Leon, fagged by his mental struggles, came late, just in time for dinner; and had barely recovered his usual genial charm when over the coffee in the library Mrs. Riderdale inquired:

"Leon, why do you not accept Charlotte's dream as divinely sent and obey it?"

Leon's coffee cup was arrested half way to his lips by this query; and he looked from mother to daughter and back again until Mrs. Riderdale added:

"Charlotte has told me all about it, and I think you should do exactly what she says. I do not see that you have any choice. It is in the line of your cherished beliefs and your chosen pursuit. How can you ignore it, without giving the lie to all you have made us think you care most about?"

Leon moved on his chair. Here was his past with a vengeance, and from Mrs. Riderdale, too, his worst antagonist, who had been so relieved at knowing he intended to do nothing peculiar.

Leon drank his coffee to gain time; then lifting his eyes, encountered a twinkle of amusement in Mr. Riderdale's eyes and a suppressed curve at the corners of that gentleman's mouth and his back stiffened. He wanted to laugh, but the knowledge of the grave scrutiny of the two ladies restrained him, and he asked Mr. Riderdale:

"What do you think?"

During the day Mr. Riderdale had carefully refrained from expressing an opinion, and he now merely made a gesture including Leon and the two ladies; and Leon turned to Mrs. Riderdale and said what had not until that moment entered his mind.

"Madam, granted the substantial truth of the dream, my mother's case is not bad. The place where her body is buried is not crowded nor confined; and it is within a quarter of a mile of friends who knew her better than I did. If her soul needs refuge, one of those friends she would probably prefer to me."

"Her will requests the cremation of her body and the definite disposal of its ashes," said Mrs. Riderdale.

"Yes: but I cannot conceive that any mortal can know so much of the immortal purpose as is implied in my mother's will. She probably got hold of some fragment of a possibly true idea, and interpreted that fragment according to her perception of her personal successes and failures in her late life. She may already know

that the best we can do for her is to leave her body to the kindly chances of common usages."

"Those chances are anything but kindly if Charlotte's dream be worth anything."

"Madam, reflect how many of the world's greatest and best, at death, have their bodies embalmed and sealed in caskets with every precaution taken to retard decay. Shall we say the whole scheme is so badly planned and so cruelly executed as to put the best souls at such awful disadvantage, not for a short time but for centuries?"

"It is possible," said Mr. Riderdale. All eyes turned to him; but he only smiled and looked at Leon, who flushed and said:

"Yes: I know, time and affairs on this small planet are, as Jean Paul Richter once said, less to the whole than a grain of blossom dust to all our world."

"But insignificant as our world is, we may do the best we can with it," said Charlotte earnestly.

"Yes:" answered Mr. Riderdale, "but a wise man does not retrace his steps when possible to avoid it. There is a guiding of events that is—shall we say it?"—smiling at Charlotte—"of more worth than dreams."

"Why, then, did I have the dream, I never had one like it before?" asked Charlotte.

Mr. Riderdale looked at Leon, but as he seemed absorbed in his own thoughts, Mr. Riderdale replied:

"Youth is apt to think that each new experience is the greatest of its kind if not totally unique, while we old fellows know that newness and strangeness are no proof of worth. Even the perfect of its kind is not necessarily worthy.

"Your dream came because you had been thinking about what Leon intended to do. Where the angel and all the other details came from, I do not know. There may have been floating bits of consciousness about many matters and picked up by you at random through years that something in you put together to make the dream.

"Suppose it did come to you from some higher being who inhabits our world and wishes to mend its affairs, must we turn out of our way and give a year's possibilities of four people for the doubtful good to accrue to one soul whose present state is probably better than the average condition after death?"

"Henry, your philosophy of life is thoroughly selfish. I have always told you so," remarked Mrs. Riderdale.

"And I claim it is unselfish. I keep my hands off my neighbor's affairs save when he forces me to resist encroachments from him or directly seeks my aid. You have not found me conspicuously unjust in the former nor unresponsive in the latter save when some fellow proposed to make a parasite of himself."

"The world needs mending, and those who see the need ought to do the mending," said Mrs. Riderdale.

"What do we know about the need? When the Hopis and Marejos Indians begin to wear white men's clothing they slit the coats under the arms to let the air into the arm pit. We would call that a rent to be mended, but probably the Indian has the better of us in that little matter. There is no telling how many moral rents we seek to close that are like that slit in the Indian's coat,—the need of a nature trying to adjust itself to alien customs."

"But when we have light we should use it," said Charlotte.

"To guide one's own steps."

"But in this matter, I thought light had been given to me for Leon and that he should follow it. He said, I should be the chooser."

Leon looked at her gravely and said: "Yes: you ought to be." Then looking down, he tried to reconcile her role to the present facts and his judgments about them; but failed.

Mr. Riderdale smiled at the two and said:

"If I understand Leon's ideas about consciousness, he has given a role to one that belongs to both. What each brings, the other should examine and cull from. Where one feels more strongly about a matter, that one should be followed until convicted of error. Feeling strongly is no proof of right, but such feeling can be satisfied only by passing into conduct.

To suppress it is bad for the nature. But this matter belongs to Leon, and"—turning to Charlotte—"you should cheerfully acquiesce in his judgment."

"But suppose I am right and he is wrong?"

"Ideas of right and wrong change with every generation of men. Each man left free takes the line of least resistance. Where two are united, as you and Leon soon will be, the two should act as one unit, as different parts of one mind; and if this is done honestly each will have equal chance to lead. Right and wrong are of less consequence than fair dealing to each other, as there are no infallible standards of right and wrong."

"Well, then, we are to go to Mexico, after all," said Charlotte, rising and moving through the room with a motion plainly suggestive of relief.

"After all," said Leon, following her, his relief more real than hers.

"After all," said Mr. Riderdale, looking fondly at the two, glad that the tension of the past few days was relaxed.

"After all," said Mrs. Riderdale, "I suppose I should resist you all and make a martyr of myself to fulfill the dream in order to keep alive in the family some spark of duty and self-sacrifice."

"Let us down easily, Mom; easily."

They all laughed, Leon took his leave, and Charlotte went singing up the stairs.

The two elder persons looked at each other and smiled.

"Why did you do it?"

"It struck me that way."

"Not quite comfortable to be dragging at one's heels the rest of life."

"You are incorrigible. Your sense of the ridiculous"——

"Useless you mean; don't you, Mom?"

"Well, useless, carries you farther than all my pride or my sense of duty have ever been able to."

"You mean saves us from more."

"It is the same thing."

"Not at all. He that has not acted has all possibilities within grasp; but let an act be consummated and the doer is forever afterward limited thereby."

"Then do nothing at all."

"As nearly as possible."

"There is something wrong with Leon."

"What is it?"

"I do not know, but he will end by following his profession."

"I hope not."

"I should be greatly relieved if he did; but he has never told any dreams of his that are more important than this one of Charlotte's."

"I have been wondering if this dream could throw any light on the differences between the civilzations of Greece who cremated her dead and Egypt who embalmed hers."

"It would have immense consequences everywhere. Why, then, useless in this case?"

"A drop in an ocean."

"There must be a first."

"It is not ours. Leon did not care."

"I cannot forgive him."

"You don't have to."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE TAINT IN THE BLOOD

Leon Gustaberg and Charlotte Riderdale were married at noon of Christmas Day in St. Stephen's Church in San Francisco; and at evening of the same day, the family departed for the City of Mexico.

Two months were spent in traveling in that quaint and still half barbaric land, and then the party followed the spring along the Gulf of Mexico and up the Atlantic coast.

On arriving at New York City, Leon left the party and returned to San Francisco. Charlotte begged hard to go with him, but he refused.

Charlotte had never been contented with the outcome of her dream. Her father's philosophy and her husband's indifference were alike distasteful to her; and as her mother sympathized with her, she finally insisted that something be done.

She had written to Emma about the matter and received from Jane Bowers a list of places where Mrs. Gustaberg's ashes were to be scattered. She had likewise corresponded with Mr. Ramsburgh and doubted not that with his

assistance she could herself conclude the affair as well as it could be without the actual presence of Jane.

So she offered to go alone, knowing which, her mother offered to go with her; and these offers brought the matter to a focus.

Leon refused to let either of the ladies go; and in this decision Mr. Riderdale backed him up.

The two men had no mind to have their women folk made the laughing stock of California and probably of the whole country; for what paper could resist such a bit of news as two women of the upper classes wandering about scattering a dead woman's ashes on people's door sills, under trees, by waysides, in streams, and repeating formulæ over the scattering. It would undoubtedly send a laugh from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

So Leon, whose own doubts about his former decisions, Charlotte's interest had not allowed to abate, went alone. He would not take Charlotte, lest in her zeal, she do something to start the laugh.

On arriving at San Francisco, Leon called on Mr. Ramsburgh; and the first thing that worthy did was to hand over a bit of correspondence which he had once pigeon-holed; and to point to an old hair-covered, brass-studded trunk that he had only that morning had transferred from his house in Alameda to his office.

Leon read the correspondence and, meeting the old man's eyes, smiled. Lawyer Ramsburgh never knew why Leon apparently felt no annoyance at the theft of the diaries by Jane Bowers, nor at his connivance in the theft, nor at the responsibility that he took in so long suppressing Jane's confession.

But Leon's manner of taking the matter won on the old man, so that he disclosed to Leon certain facts about his late client that it was important to Leon to know.

The two had a somewhat lengthy confidential talk; and some days later went to San Diego together. Mrs. Gustaberg's body was exhumed, the heart and lungs removed, the body cremated, and its ashes put in a convenient receptacle.

Then the two men selected from the forty-odd places named in Jane Bowers' list twelve that Lawyer Ramsburgh knew were Mrs. Gustaberg's especial favorites; and these they visited, the one dropping the ash, the other saying the prescribed formulæ.

And no one imagined what the two men were doing; and not a word of it all got into the papers.

It was stated at San Diego that the body was taken up in order to be removed; the lungs and heart were taken out by a surgeon who held his tongue; the body was transported by rail to a strange station, and thence driven to a desolate valley, where it was burned. Only two work-

men knew what it was that was burned and both kept the secret until death. And when, in the scattering of the ashes, the two men went to a house, Lawyer Ramsburgh made some inquiry about Mrs. Gustaberg; and if anyone noticed the ash on the door sill, after the two had gone, it was supposed to have come from old Ramsburgh's pipe.

So much secrecy was necessary because Mrs. Gustaberg was known; and a few persons there were in California who would have thought that person or persons hopelessly demented who had sufficiently respected any strange request of hers as to fulfill it.

For Mrs. Gustaberg had spent three years in an insane asylum; and had been discharged as a hopeless but harmless lunatic.

Lawyer Ramsburgh had been instrumental in getting her out; and it was largely owing to this act that there sprang up the intimacy which led Mrs. Gustaberg to go to him with all her vagaries and keep up a continual reticence toward all other persons. He had been her safety valve; and he confessed to Leon that a few times he had been obliged to bring to bear the fear of being again incarcerated before Mrs. Gustaberg would drop some new and particularly public vagary.

"Why, then, did you take her part when you read the will, and urge upon Emma and me belief in her sanity, as you did?"

"Because I thought the trick played on her enough to have made any woman insane, let alone kept her so when already started; and it was not exactly square that Jane Bowers and I had had all those years of trouble while you and Emma went scot-free. There are some things that money don't pay for."

"You pretended to believe in my death?"

"Did believe in it. Emma managed that affair so well that even I never got hold of it. I knew only that in staying away from her mother, she was obeying her father's orders. She treated your mother well though. She left with me for your mother's use two-thirds of your father's property. How she managed to take care of herself and educate you on the remainder is a mystery to me."

Leon could have enlightened him; but he only said:

"Then Jane knew?"

"Always: but Mrs. Gustaberg's case had curious phases. She hastened to me—either coming to me or sending for me—with every new vagary; but she secreted everything from Jane. She liked Jane as servant, would have no one else about her person, but she never confided in her."

"Jane must have had a hard time of it."

"She did at first. I often feared we should lose her. But she's made of good stuff; and finally she came to love Mrs. Gustaberg as one sometimes sees a mother whose crippled or idiotic child is dearer than any other."

"My sister is rather level-headed; and she was quite impressed by the diaries," ventured Leon, remembering the offer that Emma had written to him after reading them.

"Your sister's a chip of the old block—the Gustaberg side I mean—but all women and some men have a peculiar fondness for short cuts; and in your mother's vagaries were short cuts to most everything on earth and in heaven. The simplicity and beauty of the stuff swung me off my feet several times; and but for a certain cussed hard-headedness in me, I should be to-day as crazy as she was."

"Then why have we done this thing?" pointing with a gesture of self-pity and disgust to the receptacle containing a small remnant of the ash, which was intended for a spring to which the two men were strolling.

Lawyer Ramsburgh looked with shrewd kindness at Leon and then said:

"I have in my lifetime, been made the depository of many secrets and have been asked to take a hand in various affairs. There are those living who take such an interest in you as would leave no stone unturned to save you from your mother's fate. What better way than to aid you to action that itself brings in the doing the desired repulsion?"

"Was it Emma?"

"No: James Hubbard."

Leon started and his face became dyed and double dyed.

"You need not resent it. Even your sister does not know; but I have Hubbard's permission to tell you when the time comes; and it has now, eh?"

Leon was sick at heart. Everything was crumbling beneath his feet. His chosen pursuit, about which he had made so much with the Riderdales, looked like an illusion, a mere vagary of his mother's sick brain; and what he had said to Charlotte that had so profoundly impressed her, about the trinity of substance, motion, and consciousness, looked like the blasphemy of a raving maniac. His first wild impulse was to get away. If only he could dissolve and become nothing! But he was a very substantial something, sitting there by the wayside in northern California, under a tree, looking out from its shade into the hot sunshine, the hateful box between him and the old lawyer who was placidly smoking his pipe.

Leon groaned aloud, not knowing that he did so.

"You need not take it so hard." Mr. Ramsburgh emptied his pipe and refilled it. "Just put it in your mental pipe and smoke it, as I do this; and begin again, as we shall our walk presently. Nothing is of so much consequence that one needs to eat one's heart out about it. You have not begun any special work yet, and no one but the Riderdales know that you contemplate it. I take it you have not talked much."

"Not any, save to them."

"I thought so; and your profession waits for you as it did before you left Heidelberg."

Leon winced, seeing which, the old lawyer determined not to spare him.

"Hubbard's father and your mother had this in common—both believed they could set the world right; and they started to do it by breaking up two families in order to try certain experiments together. They ran away. Your father took one of them back—"

"Good God!" Leon covered his ears. When he had uncovered them, Mr. Ramsburgh continued:

"The other never was. I believe he ended"—looking hard at Leon—"at your father's house. He went under a false name. Sam—"

Leon sprang to his feet.

"Sit down and hear me out," said the lawyer with a tone of stern authority that reminded Leon of his father at the wanderer's grave.

"Your father understood; and he was never fooled about it, one way or the other. He saw black as black, and white as white, and knew that gray was neither the one nor the other.

"Mrs. Hubbard on her death bed told Jim; and he set out to find his father, but his father was already dead. He learned all the facts, however, and he ever after kept track of your family. He meant to do something, if opportunity ever came, to return the kindness his father had received from yours in those last

days. That is why he happened in Berlin, where he met your sister and fell in love with her. I told him she was here that night they were married. He came to me first."

"There is nothing then for me to do but to go back to my profession?"

"There is no need to put it that way. You have not begun yet. You took your second degree only a year ago. Every young man is entitled to a year after such hard study as you have been through; and you have made mighty good use of the year."

"You mean Mrs. Gustaberg?"

"Yes; Charlotte Riderdale was one of the finest girls in the country, and you're a lucky dog to have got her. Now don't go to stuffing her with notions. Fight shy of peculiarities as you would of pestilence, and you will come out well enough."

"But if there is such a taint in my blood"—he was thinking of his mother's race—"I ought not to have married at all."

"Tut, tut; there isn't any clean blood, any race without taint. The Riderdales have it on both sides. It is not always insanity; there are others quite as bad. There's sporting blood when a man will sell his soul for a horse; gambling blood when a man is not happy without getting something for nothing every day of his life; seducing blood when a man takes virtue as an Apache does scalps; then there is the consumption taint, and the epileptic, and so

on. Every family of three generations and a dozen ramifying branches has at least one taint, and most of them, half a dozen. Get rid of the notion that you are peculiar, that your special vagary or taint has either distinction or disgrace in it; and go ahead, resolved to win in doing something straightforward and ordinary."

Leon looked at the old man and found beauty in the blotched and bloated face. Tears started to his eyes, seeing which the lawyer reached his hand; and Leon took the small, red, fat hand in his large, fair, sinewy one, and the two rose together, and thus clasped Leon said:

"I thank you. I will take your advice."

Mr. Ramsburgh turned and picked up the box carefully. Leon reached out with evident gesture to turn it over, but the lawyer drew it away.

"You are tired; empty it here and throw away the box, and let us go and dine. I'm as hungry as a bear."

"I'm good for another half mile out and all the way back. Lead on and let's finish."

"Why," Leon began, but the old man stopped him with a gesture and said whimsically:

"Even I have to be humored sometimes."

So the two trudged on to the spring, where Leon knelt and took deep draughts of the sparkling water, after which Mr. Ramsburgh gently scattered the last of the ash, himself repeating: "Unto mine own again, unto mine

own," and watched the ash float away down the tiny streamlet, until its particles were caught on pebbles and sunk or vanished. Looking up, he caught Leon's eyes and said:

"I shouldn't 'a slept nights if I hadn't finished it. I'm an old fool. You are young; avoid foolishness."

"How may I hope to if you haven't?"

"You can't, but you can try."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE GOLDEN AGE

Charlotte was a four months' bride when Leon started for California; yet she was the same girl that stood at St. Stephen's altar on Christmas Day.

Married life had been to her but an extension of the family life that she had always known. She had had the happiest sort of a time these four months with the most devoted, most tireless, most entertaining, most handsome—these are Charlotte's own descriptives—comrade girl ever had. As Leon had treated her with the greatest reticence and delicacy, she had never yet found him in the way, had too much of him, or had him when she did not want him.

This last idea was the keynote of Leon's policy toward her. She should have nothing she did not want, and each want must spring spontaneously within herself.

When Leon had been gone about two weeks Charlotte began to do some thinking.

She was with relatives and friends, made much of, feted, courted, flirted with to her heart's content,—or rather to the heart's content of an ordinary thoughtless girl. Her

parents and Temple and their familiar servants were there too.

But she missed Leon. She had wished to go with him, not because she dreaded separation, but to see that the matter Leon had in hand was fully and properly attended to. When her going was ruled out by Leon and her father, she took Leon's going as a matter of course and neither thought nor expected anything about it.

And now she was finding that she had never missed any person or thing in her life as she did Leon. She lacked neither attentions nor amusements, and Leon would be gone two months at farthest. Why should such a little absence be so hard to bear?

Finally one night, after a day and evening of unusual gayety, during which she had been distinguished above every other woman present, married or single, she passed the hours until morning in an agony of dread lest she never see Leon again. His absence was killing her. It was as though she herself were broken in two and bleeding at every point of the fracture. She called herself every foolish name, reassured herself by every argument of reason—all to no purpose.

The next morning, as soon as she could see her father alone, she begged him to take her away to some quiet place in the country. She was tired of everything.

Mr. Riderdale had been watching Charlotte for a week, and he now looked closely at her as he said:

"What ails my girl?"

She turned her back and looked out of a window.

"I'm homesick for Leon."

"Is that all? He has not been gone four weeks yet?"

"It's four centuries," turning to face her father.

"You get letters?"

"Nearly every day."

"Leon is well; nothing unpleasant has happened?"

"No; but I want him."

"You have plenty of beaux, no end of attention. What could a girl want more?"

She came close and put her arms around his neck.

"Dear Pop. I'm sick of it all. I want Leon as I never wanted anything before in my life." Mr. Riderdale laughed a happy laugh. "I'd start for California to-morrow if I thought he would not be displeased. I wish to go to South K— and stay there until he comes. There, I can at least think of him, while here"—she gave a gesture which included all her environment—"I'm forced to pay attention to a thousand things that do not interest me in the least."

And so they went, the father and daughter, and wandered about the sleepy old village in

apple blossom time. Orchards were everywhere and the trees were huge bouquets of fragrant bloom. Charlotte never tired of their strolls. Her father fell into her mood and was as silent as she.

Her thoughts were always of Leon; and his—who shall say what he did not think of, as they two strolled the fields and the country roads, soaked themselves in the hot noonday sunshine; or resting, stretched on the green turf, were lulled to light slumbers by the droning of bees in the blossom laden branches overhead.

On some days, it seemed to Charlotte that she had never lived before, and never before known Leon or herself. All distress vanished. Leon seemed always near; and she sometimes thought were he actually there she would be unable to endure the fullness of the joy of it, she had so much now alone, just thinking of him.

And there Leon found her, in mid-June; and together they sought his mother's birth place to deposit her heart under the oak.

The house was gone, and the broken walls of its foundations were overgrown with vegetation; and as for the once stately oak, it had been riven by lightning and was nothing now but a dead bare splintered trunk, weathered by some eight winters.

This was the last drop in Leon's cup of humiliation; but like old Mr. Ramsburgh, he finished the task and took Charlotte away.

The next day he started for Philadelphia to make arrangements for entering upon the practice of his profession there in October; but Charlotte did not accompany him. She staid on at the little village until his return some two weeks later.

During this second absence from Leon, Charlotte completed her own self-renunciation.

Since the night of her first illumination about social matters, Charlotte had carried one ideal which she now gave up. It was her point of separateness, wherein she had hoped to be different and better than other women.

One evening she sat long on the steps of the old church on the hill, watching the sunset fade in soft splendor over the quiet summer meadows; and when she rose to go back to the village inn, she was ready for wifehood and motherhood—for all the sweet pains and sorrows and joys of the common woman's lot.

When Leon returned from Philadelphia, he told Charlotte of the change in his plans, and the arrangements he had nearly consummated for their future.

"Then there is no truth in it all?" Charlotte asked when he had finished.

"I am like Lawyer Ramsburgh. I am an old fool. I cannot let it go. I wish there were something in it. I believe in it in spite of all evidence to the contrary."

"In just what part do you believe?"

"I believe that a force is coming to conscious-

ness in humanity which will give man new senses and new powers; but, so far, no one has seemed level-headed enough for this new consciousness to focus in him without his own conceit and imagination making a fool of him in some direction."

"But why should we not try; we need not be so foolish?"

"I have been educated to a profession. I shall stick to it and saw wood. If that force desires anything of me, it must push into me, through and in spite of ordinary conditions. I go not out of my way for it. I stand not on corners waiting its unknown favors. I was willing, I am still, to be its vehicle; but it may have no use for me. Let us dismiss the matter once and for all. I shall work too hard after October comes to care."

Charlotte laid her hand on his arm.

"You thought it would lead to some promised land and bring a return of the golden age. I did too. I shall remember and wait and watch."

"No use. Our golden age is right here," looking into her eyes.

CHAPTER XXX

THE TURN OF THE CURRENT

About a month later, Leon and Charlotte were in the dense shade of a cluster of stately old maple trees, on a hill overlooking a beautiful portion of the valley of the Nangatuck River in Connecticut. They had gone to this valley on leaving South K——, a few days after Leon's return from Philadelphia.

Leon was stretched full length on the dense green turf, while Charlotte sat upon a rustic seat near by, reading aloud from that delightful old story book, Sir Thomas Malory's "Morte D'Arthur." Lifting her eyes, she saw her father coming toward them from across the fields.

Charlotte had not seen her father since Leon's first return from California. He had then left her to join her mother and a party of friends who were off on a trip to Quebec.

Charlotte now suddenly felt her heart gripe and her throat fill, though she could not have told why. Noticing that the reading had stopped, Leon looked toward her and seeing the emotion in her face asked:

"What is it?"

"Father's coming."

"Well?"

"He's coming to remonstrate."

"Why should he? I gave my reasons in the last letter."

"More than to me?"

"No: aren't they enough?"

"I cannot see them so, and I have tried to. Nothing you have told me accounts for so sudden a loss of interest in a life-long desire."

Leon sprang up to go and meet his father-in-law and have it over. He did not wish to discuss it before Charlotte; but seeing the look of entreaty on her face, he hesitated and then threw himself down again, saying:

"Go on."

Charlotte resumed the reading with an unsteady voice; and Mr. Riderdale making a detour was lost to their sight and came upon them suddenly.

"And you are the children who have been writing your father that Leon is tied to an office and you both to Philadelphia for the rest of your life?"

"I once heard you say you'd prefer"—Leon began, springing up to greet the comer.

"Yes, yes, I know. If you must, you could not do better, but why at all?" asked Mr. Riderdale, grasping his hand and trying to detain it.

But Leon turned away. He had hoped to spare Charlotte and her parents; but he already realized that they were not and probably never

would be satisfied. Moreover, there were others who knew perhaps even more than old Ramsburgh did; and any day some one might tell the tale in some bit of drawing room gossip.

"Best make a clean breast of it, my son. There is no one here to chide," said Mr. Riderdale, as he took a seat at Charlotte's side and projected his words at Leon's back.

Leon seated himself on the ground beyond Mr. Riderdale. He did not wish to be near Charlotte; he still felt that he had wronged her by having such a mother, and he had treated her with more reserve than ever, since he had returned from Philadelphia, as though by putting her on an unapproachable pedestal, he could atone for having married her.

Suddenly he thought of Emma and of their last private talk in the gray dawn of the morning that she went away; and knew that she had then drunk deep of what he was about to drink now—the dregs of their mother's race.

But after a little, he told all that Mr. Ramsburgh had told him, without looking at either of his listeners. The long silence made him turn. Charlotte was clasping one of her father's hands in both of hers while tears flowed silently down her cheeks; and Leon was startled by the look of compassionate love and understanding which she gave him.

Mr. Riderdale was looking far away and they waited for him. He reached out, took one of Leon's hands and drew it to one of Char-

lotte's; and so clasping his hands over theirs he said:

"I know more about the essential facts of this tale than perhaps any other person living today; at least, I believe more. I knew Samuel Hubbard. He came to me after his wife refused to receive him back and told me the whole story, though I did not know it was your mother"—turning his eyes on Leon, who flushed scarlet and bent his head.

"Not so fast, my sensitive youth, not so fast. Your mother and Samuel Hubbard went away together to realize in actual living the injunction: 'Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom.' They started out to live as the angels do, who neither marry nor are given in marriage; and they meant to live the precepts of Jesus literally in all things; and I suppose no two on earth have come nearer to reaching that ideal than they two during the few months that they were together.

"The gossips got after them and then set on the dogs of law; and the two gave it up and went back. Mrs. Hubbard refused to believe her husband as to the actual facts; and I suppose your father never believed your mother.

"But I believed then and I believe now. Samuel Hubbard was the most sincere and guileless man I have ever known. They two thought that they had only to start themselves and to tell others about it to set going a movement that

would bring a millennium. They left their homes because their families were unsympathetic, and with expectation of return so soon as the movement was started and they had proofs to show.

"It seems a pity that when so many worthless people are forgiven all sorts of vices that these two could not have had their mistakes condoned.

"I have ever since had a soft place in my heart for those whose foolishness consists in having the courage of their convictions about the innate goodness of humanity and about certain ideal patterns of life set by Buddha, Jesus, and other reformers.

"The world laughs at them, and it is right to laugh; as right as it would be to laugh at a man who could think that, by his rising at four o'clock in winter time, he could make the sun rise at that hour. The sun does rise at that hour in summer; but the summer of the world has not yet come."

"I wish it had," said Charlotte impulsively, withdrawing her hand and flushing painfully.

Mr. Riderdale looked at her questioningly; then turned to Leon with:

"You see there is no reason to be ashamed, and no sufficient reason for changing your plans. There—"

"I shall follow my profession."

"But—"

Leon sprang to his feet and strode away. He would not reopen the question nor discuss it further. Old Ramsburgh's words had burned too deep; and what Mr. Riderdale had just added was less of an emendation than a new indictment.

Leon's whole nature, which had been thickening ever since he heard Charlotte's dream, now suddenly set itself in hard fixed lines.

Father and daughter looked at each other and Charlotte's lips quivered.

"Leon hasn't ballast enough. He is like your mother; he must be all one thing or all the other. Now you and I"—playfully—"think we could ride on the middle of the balance."

"I wish we could try."

"Doubtless some generations must pass before this new thing—whatever it ultimately prove to be—is understood or comes into full possession of itself in humanity. I have read everything that has come out about it; but I have not seen the real thing yet. I believe though that there is something to believe in."

"And you and I?"

"Must move along with the stream; nothing that we can do will either hasten or retard the turn of the current."

"It goes in great circles, and the turn is imperceptible. It always is."

"Yes, my daughter; it always is."